

THE INDEPENDENT

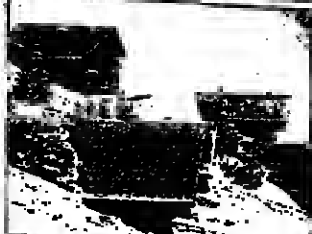
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Saturday 7 February 1998 70p No 3,528

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ELGAR PREMIERE
How symphony was resurrected. Page 16

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KENDALL RETURNS
Giving Everton the scoring touch

ART



FREUD RECORD
£2m price tag sets a record for a British painting. Page 3

Clinton defiant as accusations pour in

President Clinton defiantly faced new allegations about his relationship with Monica Lewinsky yesterday, denying that he had asked his secretary to lie for him.

Questions about the affair quite overwhelmed the visit by Tony Blair to Washington. Asked at a White House news conference—conducted jointly with Mr Blair—at what point he might just get up and walk away, Mr Clinton said: "Never... I would never walk away from the people of this country and the trust they've placed in me."

Warning to his theme, he said: "I'm just going to keep showing up for work. I'm going to do what I was hired to do." Obliquely admitting that the allegations had hurt him, he said: "The pain threshold... of being in public life today, has been raised. But to give in to that would be to give in to everything that I have fought against."

Mr Clinton repeated his denial that there was an improper relationship with Monica Lewinsky, then a 21-year-old White House trainee, but refused to discuss a spate of new disclosures, saying that all legal proceedings were subject to a confidentiality order and he was intent on complying with it, whether others did or not. He was said to be considering legal action against the independent prosecutor, Kenneth Starr, for the leaks.

Mr Clinton's concern for legality was interpreted by some US analysts as evidence that the latest disclosures—details of which were published in yesterday's newspapers—were potentially very damaging. He is alleged not only to have had an affair with Ms Lewinsky, but to have told her, and perhaps others, to lie about it.

The New York Times, relying on what it said were "lawyer" sources, said there was a significant discrepancy between sworn testimony given by Mr Clinton about his relationship with Ms Lewinsky and subsequent information given by his personal secretary, Betty Currie.

Mrs Currie was one of the few members of the White House staff to emerge from giving evidence this week not to have told reporters afterwards that she was "unaware of any improper relationship between the President and Ms Lewinsky or anyone else for that matter". Mrs Currie, described as a devout Christian, was said to have been "in turmoil" about her evidence and went absent from her White House job for several days after testifying.

By Mary Dejevsky in Washington

According to the New York Times, Mr Clinton had effectively coached her in what she should tell the inquiry, calling her into the office on a Sunday to recount in detail his own testimony and encourage her to repeat it. At one point, the newspaper reports, he told her: "We were never alone, right?"

Mrs Currie, however, seems to have proved less biddable than Mr Clinton may have hoped. She reportedly told the inquiry that the two were sometimes alone, though they were always in earshot. She also said to have handed to investigators a box containing a dress, a brooch, hatpin and other small articles said to be gifts from Mr Clinton to Ms Lewinsky.

Yesterday, both Mrs Currie's lawyer and the White House denied that Mr Clinton had "coached" his secretary in what to say, but did not deny that a meeting took place or the existence of gifts.

Another damaging leak was printed in the Washington Post. This was the text of an affidavit, signed by Linda Tripp, the colleague of Ms Lewinsky who secretly taped her conversations with the former trainee. In this short statement, dated 21 January, she says that Ms Lewinsky "revealed to me in detailed conversations on innumerable occasions that she has had a sexual relationship with President Clinton since November 15, 1995". She said she had also heard "at least three tapes containing the President's voice" and had seen "gifts they exchanged".

The date mentioned is when the US government was virtually shut down because of a budget disagreement and the White House was staffed to a large extent by trainee volunteers.

In the meantime, Ms Lewinsky was pondering whether to accept the terms set by Mr Starr for obtaining immunity from prosecution. She needs such immunity to avoid a perjury charge if she goes back on her sworn denial of an affair with Mr Clinton. According to her lawyer an immunity deal was agreed and signed before she left Washington for California on Tuesday. The prosecutor, however, was reportedly insisting on a face-to-face interview with her before granting immunity and had given her until midday yesterday to decide.



Star-spangled dinner: Bill Clinton and Tony Blair thanking Elton John and Stevie Wonder after their performance at the White House banquet

Photograph: AFP

US and Britain insist on force against Iraq

Bill Clinton and Tony Blair put on a strong common front over Iraq yesterday, insisting that if diplomacy fails then military force will follow.

By Mary Dejevsky in Washington

France have their doubts about air strikes.

Mr Blair confirmed that Britain is sending eight Tornado aircraft to Kuwait in case they are needed.

"These are ground-attack and reconnaissance aircraft," Mr Blair said. "It will take place over the next few days."

Though the move is really a gesture, it has high political significance at a time when the US is getting flak from its partners over its helicopter stance on the Gulf.

The Prime Minister said the two leaders had discussed Iraq, the peace process in the Middle East, Bosnia, the global economy, the Asian financial crisis and the importance for Europe of Turkey.

The Prime Minister cited a "great comradeship and partnership" between the two countries.

The two leaders and their wives were spending last night at Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland's Catoctin mountains. In private, British officials said, the two leaders discussed the logistics of an Iraqi attack.

There were signs of frustration within the Clinton administration over the political pushing and pulling. Defense Secretary William Cohen, appearing at a Congressional hearing on Thursday, complained about the UN.

"We think, frankly, if the United Nations were to stand behind its own resolutions... that would be the best way to contain him," Mr Cohen said.

The already large American presence grew even larger with the arrival in the Gulf of a third aircraft-carrier and the order by President Clinton for ships carrying 2,000 Marines to move into the area.



Woman goes to war on Lord Chancellor's 'old boys' network

By Anthony Bevins
Political Editor

The Lord Chancellor, the country's leading judicial official, is being taken to an industrial tribunal in an embarrassingly open-and-shut case of operating an illegal old boys' network.

As Lord Irvine of Lairg was himself appointed Lord Chancellor as a leading member of Tony Blair's old boys' network, the charge that he appointed an old friend, Garry Hart, as his adviser in the Lord Chancellor's Department came as no surprise.

But the challenge goes further than that. If the Lord Chancellor were to lose the case, due later this year, the Government would in future be prevented from employing its friends and allies in key roles and would be required to advertise all vacancies.

It could also face paying substantial compensation to Jane Coker, the solicitor bringing the action.

The proceedings have been issued against the department, complaining that the manner of the appointment was discriminatory under the terms of Labour's Sex Discrimination Act 1975.

Ms Coker, a senior solicitor with a North London practice, said it was a great pity Labour had talked about equal opportunities in Opposition and not practised it in office.

A statement by Jane Deighton, the solicitor representing Ms Coker, said: "The



Jane Coker: Claims proper selection for the position did not take place

Photograph: Ben Gurr/INS

proceedings allege that Mr Hart, senior partner of a City firm of solicitors and a middle-aged white man, was appointed because he was known to the Lord Chancellor. Advertising and proper selection did not take place.

"The applicant to the Industrial Tribunal, Jane Coker, did not know about the job and therefore could not apply."

"She would have been a formidable candidate... This

proceedings are a fundamental challenge to the practice new governments have of employing their friends and allies once elected. This practice, the proceedings claim, is illegal."

The chances of the Lord Chancellor surviving his latest scrape look remote. His department has not even bothered to reply to the legal interrogation that has been sent in under the terms of the Sex Discrimination Act; suggest-

ing it has no reply to offer. Ms Deighton said: "It is very simple nowadays: if your associates are primarily men, then it is going to discriminate against women, if you choose your adviser from amongst your associates."

The same would apply in terms of racial discrimination, if all of Lord Irvine's associates were white. As for the Westminster and Whitehall charge that Mr Blair is also guilty of similar discrimination, having made many appointments from among "Tone's cronies", Ms Deighton said: "It is particularly wrong to have a clique of old associates of the Prime Minister running the country: that is anti-democratic. Lord Irvine was Tony Blair's tutor; Charlie Falconer, the Solicitor-General, is an old friend of Tony Blair's."

"What democracy demands is that people best suited to the jobs are appointed to them, not people who happen to be known to those in power. And that is also what the law requires."

Ms Coker added: "No, this is not sour grapes. What it is saying is that the job of special adviser to the Lord Chancellor, at a time when the Lord Chancellor is looking very closely at the way in which the law is accessible to people from less privileged backgrounds, and the poor, is an important position and I would have expected him to seek to ensure that he appointed the best person for the job."



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Thousands killed in Afghan quake

A powerful earthquake jolted Afghanistan's remote northeast this week, killing as many as 4,000 people, an Afghan official said yesterday in the first casualty reports to emerge.

The quake hit the city of Rustaq, 150 miles north of the capital, Kabul, destroying 15,000 homes, according to Sher Mohammed, a spokesman for the military alliance that controls the area.

Afterquakes rocked the mountainous area for hours afterwards, he said, speaking by satellite telephone. The US Geological Survey in Golden, Colorado, put the magnitude of Wednesday's quake at 6.1 on the Richter Scale. Mr Mohammed said the landslides at the epicentre caused much of the destruction.

News of the devastation, in the isolated northern province of Takhar, which borders Tajik-



istan, reached Kabul only yesterday, and details remained difficult to confirm.

The ousted Afghan President, Burhanuddin Rabbani, who leads the anti-Taliban alliance that controls the area affected by the quake, has appealed for urgent help from the United Nations and the Red Cross.

— AP, Kabul

Camelot in quest for PR white knight

هكذا من الأصل

The curious tale of 'Mr Clean', the faith-healer and the divorce case

The image of football's Mr Clean has crumbled. Four months ago, Glenn Hoddle was the God-fearing England coach and family man. Today, he is starring in the strange tale of the soccer boss, the faith healer and the mistress. Louise Jury reports.

If anything goes to show that you can never really know some people, Glenn Hoddle is the living proof. For yesterday he was plunged into the middle of a divorce battle.

Millionaire property developer Jeffrey Shean named Hoddle as co-respondent in his divorce petition after the England coach allegedly spent the night with Mr Shean's wife, Vanessa. Hoddle issued absolute denials. But that seemed barely the point. To anyone who has followed the 24-year record of the born-again Christian, the very thought of Hoddle committing adultery



Family man: Glenn Hoddle yesterday, plunged into a divorce battle

would once have been as unthinkable as the Pope bearing twins.

Until last October, when he stunned his colleagues and fans by leaving Anne, his wife of 18 years, and moving into the home of a faith-healer, Hoddle was renowned as squeaky-clean. The devoted father of three children, Zoe, 14, Zara, 11, and Jamie, 5, he would be seen playing with them in the garden of their home in Ascot, Berkshire, and was a regular attendee at his local United Reform Church. Shredded Wheat even chose the family as the epitome of bright-smiling goodness for an advertisement.

While Paul Gascoigne and others of his footballing compatriots revelled in drinking and womanising, 40-year-old Hoddle simply knuckled down to the job.

A quiet, distant man - some said cold - he appeared 53 times for England after first being capped in 1979. He led Swindon Town into the Premiership, then, as

manager of Chelsea took the club to its first FA Cup final in 24 years.

When, as widely rumoured, he was offered the England job just after Euro 96, Chelsea offered £1.4m to keep him. But, personally recommended to the Football Association by Terry Venables, he accepted the post. And things appeared to be going fine.

The side completed a successful World Cup qualifying campaign with a 0-0 draw against Italy in Rome at the beginning of October. When trouble broke out among the crowds, he appeared at the door of the family home to comment on the police behaviour towards the fans.

Then just days later, the bombshell dropped. In a statement issued through the Football Association, Hoddle said he was leaving his wife, a teacher and his childhood sweetheart.

"The England coach Glenn Hoddle wishes it to be known that, with great sadness, he has separated from his wife, Anne. This is a personal and private matter. It is unconnected to his football responsibilities. Nobody else is involved."

For the first time, it became clear why Mrs Hoddle, also 40, had refused to pose for photographs with her husband after the England-Italy trouble.

Shredded Wheat withdrew their advert as "inappropriate". Neighbours expressed shock, even England team-mates seemed surprised. But nowhere near as surprised as when Hoddle then moved into the home of Eileen Drewery, a 57-year-old grandmother, married to a hicklayer called Phil.

Admittedly, any suggestion of romance was quickly scotched. Hoddle had got to know Mrs Drewery when he had dated her daughter, Michelle, as a teenager. Although that relationship petered out, he had kept in touch with the family, not least because of Mrs Drewery's powers of healing.

For years, any injury Hoddle received has been subjected to the laying on of her hands, and he brought a succession of other injured players to her door in Wokingham, Berkshire.

With the trauma of separation now engulfing him, Mrs Drewery protected Hoddle as if he were a son. "I'm just going to cook his dinner," she said. "He does not want to say anything and when he does it will be through the Football Association. He just wants to do his job and be left alone."

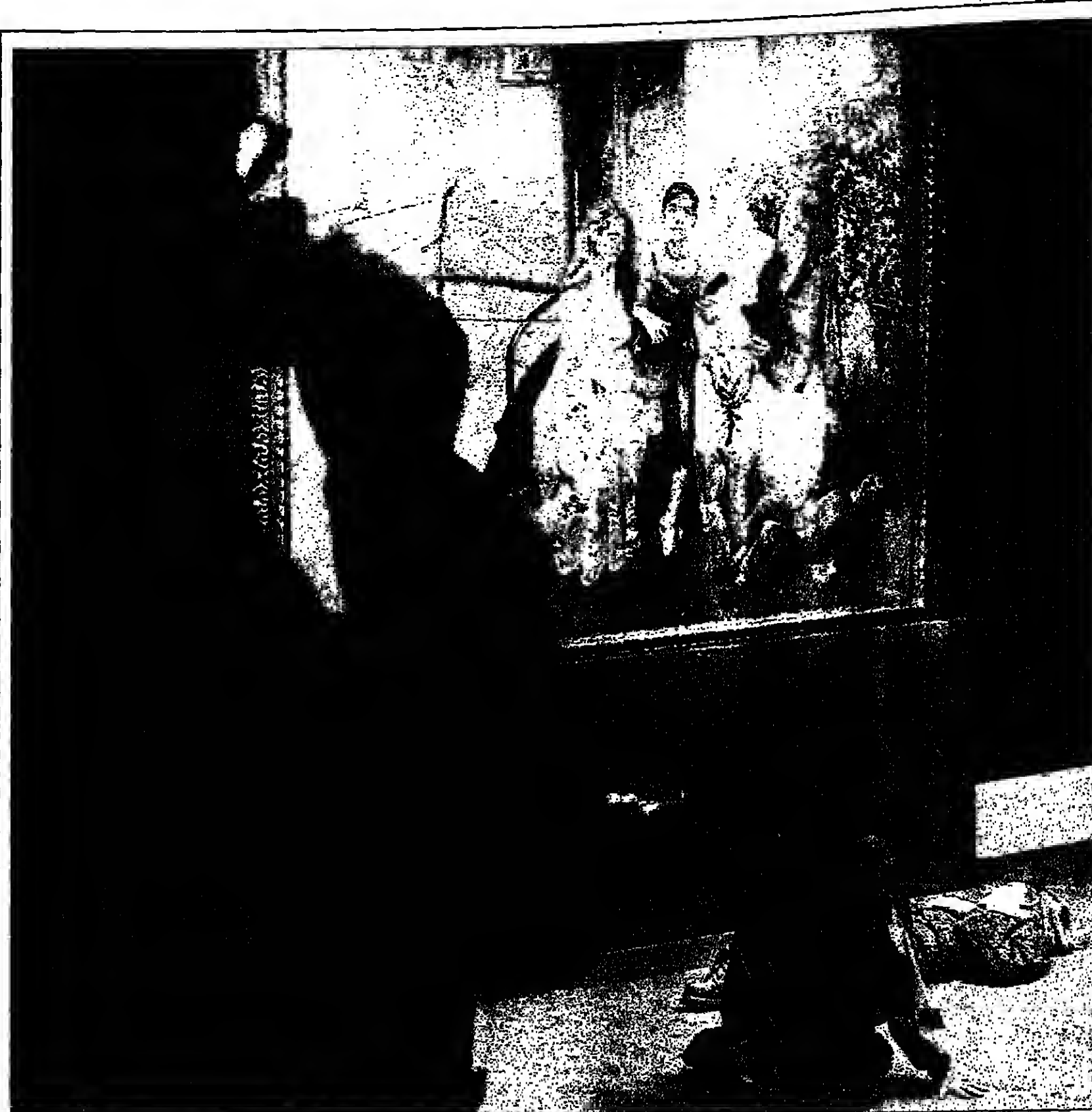
It was not to be. The rumours persisted, and the name of Vanessa Shean came to public attention last month.

The Sheans and Hoddles had met at the Royal Berkshire Racquets and Health Club, and Jeffrey Shean had been delighted with his friendship with a footballer he had so admired. But then his wife was said to have left him. Newspapers claimed that she was seeing Hoddle and yesterday solicitors provided ammunition for the stories.

Margaret Bennett, for Mr Shean, said: "We can confirm that yesterday we issued a divorce petition on the grounds of adultery on behalf of Jeffrey Shean against his wife, Vanessa, and that this petition names Glenn Hoddle as co-respondent."

Hoddle would not comment. Appearing at the door of Mrs Drewery's home in Wokingham, dressed in pink shirt and black trousers, he said that a statement would be issued later. He denied the claims.

At the five-bedroom home she used to share with Mr Clean in Ascot, Mrs Hoddle was asked what she thought. "It's all very sad," she said. Football turned out to be a dirty game after all.



The big picture: Lucien Freud's *Large Interior, Will (after Watteau)* on view at Sotheby's prior to its sale in New York on 14 May. Photograph: Andrew Buurman

£2m tag puts Lucien Freud into the record books

A masterpiece by Lucien Freud is being offered at auction of around £2m, making it the most expensive painting by a British artist alive today.

The work, *Large Interior, Will (after Watteau)*, painted between 1981 and 1983, is a monumental work inspired by Antoine Watteau's celebrated 18th-century painting *Pierrot Content*. David Lister, Arts News Editor, reports.

It will be offered for sale in New York in May by Sotheby's for an estimated price of \$2.5-3.5m.

The current auction record price for a work by Freud is £892,500 (\$1.4m) for a portrait sold last year. But Sotheby's experts claim that *Large Interior* is the artist's masterpiece and will fetch more than double that sum.

It will still not heat the record sum paid for a work by a living British artist,

which is 5.7m dollars for Francis Bacon's *Triptych May-June* in 1989, when Bacon was still alive.

The painting went on view at Sotheby's in London yesterday. It comes from the collection of James Kirkman, Freud's dealer from 1972-1992, who acquired it directly from the artist.

Elena Geuna, the head of Sotheby's contemporary art department, said: "The appearance at auction of one of the most important British paintings of the last 50

years is an event of great significance."

Large Interior, which measures 73 inches by 78 inches, is a highly charged psychological group portrait in which, in the artist's own words, "intensity is the undercurrent" and where the sitters' gaze never meets that of the viewer.

The painting depicts four seated figures, one of which is the artist's daughter, fashion designer Bella Freud, playing the mandolin. Her audience is shown sitting huddled together in a tight group listen-

ing to the performance with faraway expressions on their faces, while a fifth figure, that of a small girl, is seen lying on the floor beside them.

In *Large Interior*, Freud transforms Watteau's depiction of love and jealousy into a sombre yet atmospheric scene of thoughtfulness and introspection.

Freud's idea of portraiture came from dissatisfaction with portraits that resembled people. He once said: "I would wish my portraits to be of people, not like them. Not having the look of the sitter, being them. As far as I am concerned the paint is the person."

The new record, if it is achieved, will add to the Freud mystique. The artist, grandson of Sigmund Freud and brother of Sir Clement, is notoriously enigmatic and guards his privacy jealously.

Last year an unofficial biography, Nigel Jones, abandoned a biography billed in a publisher's catalogue as investigating the "darker, hidden side" of the artist.

His publisher, Richard Cohen, said at the time: "There is something Nigel is afraid of and I would not want to expose him to any danger."

BEST OF BRITISH AND WHAT THEY COST

Top prices paid for British contemporary art:

1. David Hockney: *Grand Procession of Dignitaries in the semi Egyptian Style* - £1,204,819 in 1989
2. Lucien Freud: *John Deakin* - £810,000 in 1997
3. Frank Auerbach: *Mornington Crescent* - £357,143 in 1990
4. Malcolm Morley: *Portrait of Vermeer* - £318,436 in 1992

5. Howard Hodgkin: *In the Bay of Naples* - £289,474 in 1996
6. Leonora Carrington: *Les Distractions de Dagobert* - £275,641 in 1995
7. Victor Pasmore: *The studio of Ingres* - £200,000 in 1997
8. Leon Kossoff: *Children's Swimming Pool* - £190,000 in 1992

Information: Art Sales Index

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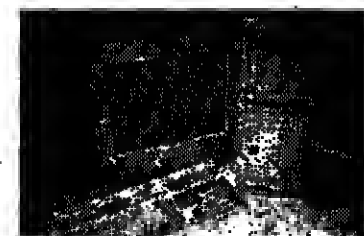


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Bhuttos take action over drug traffic allegations

The husband of Benazir Bhutto, former prime minister of Pakistan, won permission yesterday to launch legal proceedings at the High Court in London after allegations of drug-trafficking.

In a campaign spearheaded by Ms Bhutto, Asif Ali Zardari took action after the British government agreed to help the present Pakistani government's current investigations.

Mr Zardari is in custody in his homeland.

Yesterday, a judge at the High Court in London gave him leave to seek a declaration that



Asif Ali Zardari: In custody

he is entitled to access to the letter of request from Pakistan that triggered the investigation - which he says is politically motivated - or at least to know the substance of its contents.

But Mr Justice Latham refused to allow Mr Zardari's lawyers to apply for a ruling that the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, acted unfairly or irrationally in agreeing to the formal request and in nominating a court to receive evidence.

Lord Lester of Heme Hill QC, appearing for Mr Zardari, told the judge: "In this case there is a serious risk of injustice unless sufficient information

is provided to enable Mr Zardari to enjoy effective safeguards in the English proceedings. This should not depend on the Pakistan government's wishes but on basic principles of fairness."

Mr Zardari, a Pakistani senator, was taken into custody shortly after Ms Bhutto was removed from office by the president in November 1996.

He was charged in connection with the murder of Ms Bhutto's brother Murtaza, as well as alleged offences of corruption and evasion of customs duty.

His lawyers argued that the Home Secretary's decision to grant assistance was not based on those charges but on the Pakistani government's confirmation that he faced drug-related proceedings in his homeland.

Ms Bhutto and her husband believed the request was part of a wider politically motivated campaign being waged by the present Muslim League government against the Bhutto family and the Pakistan People's Party, whose leader was Ms Bhutto.

Lord Lester said Mr Zardari wanted access to the letter of request to enable his lawyers "to have a fair opportunity to cross-examine witnesses" supplying information to nominated magistrates at Bow Street court for eventual transmission back to Pakistan.

The judge agreed that there was "an arguable case". Mr Zardari's London-based lawyers, Goodman and Derrick, then indicated that they would ask the magistrates to continue an existing order and keep police investigations on hold pending Mr Zardari's full judicial review application, due on 11 March.



Benazir Bhutto: Spearheaded campaign on behalf of her husband

Revealed: parking perks of Whitehall bureaucrats

Ministers plan to crack down on company car parks because they consider them an incentive for people to drive to work. So why, asked one influential Labour peer, do top civil servants get so many places to park in the capital? Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent, examines the arguments.

There are nearly 2,500 parking spaces for civil servants in central London, according to figures obtained by Lord Berkeley, a former Labour transport spokesman. The peer yesterday questioned why so many spaces were needed at a time when motorists are being encouraged by ministers to switch to public transport.

"It is inconceivable that the Government has 2,500 essential car users in central London," said Lord Berkeley. "I believe that most just use their cars as a cheap and comfortable means of commuting, in isolation from the general public forced into crowded public transport." Lord Berkeley, chairman of the Rail Freight Group since 1996, has written to Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott, who himself took a well-publicised walk to work this week, urging him to tackle the issue.

"Mr Prescott recently called for ministers to use public transport. I have written to him suggesting that he addresses the much larger problem of private car park-

ing for officials in the same way, so that all but a few essential users forsake their cars, comply with the Government's own transport policy and set an example to the rest of the population." Experts say the Government accounts for less than 5 per cent of the total of "private non-residential car parking spaces" in central London.

The Treasury had most spaces - 429 for staff and ministers. But there were 334 at the Lord Chancellor's Office and 293 at the Social Security Department and 288 at the Health Department. Perhaps the most extravagant department is the Lord Chancellor's. The 922 staff of Lord Irvine of

Lairg's office have 343 spaces. Transport officials will wince at the constant attacks from environmentalists who say they should use their cars less. In fact, the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions has only 209 parking spaces - a small number for a department that employs 3,000 civil servants.

But high-profile transport figures - including Mr Prescott, who has a chauffeur-driven Jaguar, and rail regulator John Swift, who is given a car - say that the demands of a job requires a car.

However, some experts say that on average civil servants have less car parking spaces than big business. "Only 8 per cent of civil servants travel into work by car into central London - that is half the average rate," said Irving Yass, transport director for London First - a group which lobbies on behalf of big business in London. Mr Yass added there were 60,000 "private non-residential parking spaces" in London.

Falmouth coastguard saves Suez sailors after world ignores distress call

The distress signal went out across the world. Four Ukrainian sailors trapped in the Suez canal on an abandoned ship were desperate for help. But only coastguards in Falmouth, Cornwall, responded to the 2,900-ton *Prosper* when it signalled for help last week.

The coastguards persuaded Inmarsat, which runs international satellite communications, to open a free link with the vessel. And they discovered the sailors had been stuck there for six months with no supplies and no money to enable their return to the Ukraine.

One of the men explained they had been abandoned by the ship's master after the ship was arrested over \$1m debts allegedly owed to a Greek bank. Although they were

not under arrest, they feared they would lose any chance of wages that were owed them if they left the boat.

Henry Purbrick, from the Falmouth coastguard, said they alerted the owner's lawyer in Greece. But on Thursday they received further cries for help and called for international action to help the men.

"They sounded even more desperate. Can you imagine being in Egypt and no way of getting home?" Mr Purbrick said.

Mykola Kravchenko, of the Ukrainian embassy in London, said he was saddened by the case but it was not rare. "They have to fend for themselves," he said. "We are a country in crisis."

— Louise Jury

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Air-crash hero in fight for trauma damages

The first man to arrive at the scene of the British Midland air crash at Kegworth in 1989 went to court yesterday to seek damages for the stress he has suffered in the aftermath.

A Royal Marine yesterday described how he spent more than three hours helping to rescue the injured and dying from the crash wreckage alongside the M1 in Leicestershire.

Graham Pearson, 39, who is battling for compensation from British Midland over the acute post-traumatic stress disorder

(PTSD) he suffered in the wake of the catastrophe, told the court how he emerged covered in blood and later had to undergo an HIV test.

Although British Midland long ago admitted "primary liability" for the January 1989 accident in which 47 people died, it is disputing the amount of damages due to Mr Turnbull, a father of four, from Goole, Humberside.

His counsel, Paul Rose, said his claim for £57,000 damages was "modestly pitched", but British Midland insists he is only due £200.

Mr Pearson, who won an award for bravery from the Royal Humane Society for his efforts, said he and his wife were driving home along the M1 af-



Time of trauma: Graham Pearson (above) who spent three hours helping survivors after the M1 air crash in 1989
Main photograph: Ian Torrance

ter visiting relatives in Kent when they saw a "flash in the sky" and quickly came upon debris. He got out of the car to see an injured passenger staggering towards him and, despite the risk of an explosion from leaking fuel, made his way into the nose of the stricken plane.

As he entered the fuselage,

"passengers were crying and screaming at me for help", Mr Pearson recalled. "I would say my main role was simply calming people down verbally and holding their hands ...

"I could hear a woman screaming from underneath the floor and every time I moved I thought of the floor

pressing on her and I could imagine her pain ... Some [passengers] were already dead and had horrific injuries," said Mr Pearson. "At the time I simply saw what had to be done and got on with it as best I could. It was simply adrenaline working, giving me the strength to do what I had to do."

Dr Gordon Turnbull, a psychiatrist, told the court how Mr Pearson had been unwilling to accept he was suffering from PTSD when he examined him in 1995. "Almost all the symptoms of PTSD were present at the time of the examination," said Dr Turnbull, head of the traumatic stress unit at Tice-

hurst House Hospital in Sussex, and author of the leading textbook on the subject. "He told me he had lost interest in most of his social and sporting activities and has simply lost his zest for them. He told me he lacks direction in his life now."

Dr Turnbull said PTSD had the effect of "pulling out the

rug" from under a victim's feet, giving them a "foreshortened view of their future". Although his condition had since improved because of intensive therapy, Dr Turnbull said he was "guarded" about whether Mr Pearson was now able to lead "a virtually normal life". Judgment is due on Monday.

Miners' health damages could cost government £3.6bn

The Government is facing a total compensation bill of over £3.5bn to miners whose health was wrecked by working down the pits, it emerged yesterday.

Six miners fighting a high court case seeking compensation for a variety of debilitating illnesses caused by their work underground, were awarded an average of £18,000 damages each yesterday.

If this figure was carried through to the estimated 200,000 miners, former miners or their widows expected to make claims, according to government figures, the final sum will be around £3.6bn.

Mr Justice Turner found on 23 January that British Coal, the defunct nationalised industry now under government administration, was negligent in the operation of its mines.

Yesterday he settled the final claims for the six men who suffered chronic ill health from inhaling coal dust, and also ruled that Cordelia Wells, widow of one of the six miners, Samuel, should receive the full statutory bereavement damages of £7,500.

Lawyers for British Coal had tried to argue that because Mr Wells's damages for ill health were halved because the judge ruled that smoking was half to blame for his chronic emphysema, the bereavement award should also be halved.

The judge ruled, however, that Mrs Wells should receive

the full amount, allowing hundreds of other widows to make the same claim whether or not their deaths may have been partly attributable to smoking.

The largest damages sum of £32,500 went to Mrs Wells of Maesteg, south Wales. The other sums ranged from £25,000 down to £5,200, making a total of £110,000.

Mr Justice Turner gave lawyers for the Government 28 days to come up with a scheme to administer and settle all outstanding claims which must be made within six months of his judgment in January.

He also imposed a punitive scale of legal costs on the Government for part of the year-long litigation for trying to argue that coal dust was not a cause of bronchitis or emphysema, against the findings of its own medical reports.

Soldier's death investigated

Military and civil police were yesterday co-operating in an investigation into the death of a soldier killed while taking part in an exercise in the mountains of mid-Wales near the Army's Sennybridge Base.

Guardsman Richard King, 22, whose parents live at Sheerness in Kent, died when he was hit by a single round from a standard service rifle during night-time manoeuvres in the early hours of Thursday. More than 50 soldiers will be interviewed to seek an explanation in what an army spokesman described as "a tragic accident".

The area is one of the Army's main infantry training grounds where Nato troops, members of the Special Air Service and the Parachute Regiment exercise along with other army units.

— Tony Heath

Hindley changes jails

Moors murderer Myra Hindley was yesterday transferred from Durham prison to a medium-security jail. The Prison Service said that she was moved from Durham prison to Highpoint in Suffolk.

A Prison Service spokesman said: "Myra Hindley has today been transferred from HMP Durham to Highpoint prison in Suffolk. She is being housed in closed female accommodation suitable for a life-sentence prisoner. It is an operational decision taken by the Prison Service and it is a routine move for a life-sentence prisoner." News of the move provoked last week anger among relatives of her victims.

Teachers to vote on action

A teachers' union is in ballot members on taking industrial action to cut the red tape which it says wastes time.

The National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers executive committee decided to take the step after it said the Government failed to act on the recommendations to cut unnecessary bureaucracy in teaching. Teachers were to be asked to stop completing a range of paper work including some types of school reports but they would still provide short reports on children. Ballot firms are due to be sent to union members later this term and a result is expected before the Easter school holiday.

Scottish E.coli alert

An E. coli precautionary alert was issued yesterday after tests revealed traces of the potentially lethal bacteria on meat destined for school meals.

Three councils—Dundee, Perth and Angus—ordered meat to be removed from schools, older people's lunch clubs, and from the meals-on-wheels service after environmental health experts in Carlisle found traces of the bug on raw meat that had been sent to school meals providers Tayside Contract. Officials in Dundee said no cases of illness had been reported, and the "stringent" cooking procedures should ensure the bacteria had been killed by the cooking process.

Schools fail test of time at maths

Less than 36 minutes a day was spent teaching maths in one in eight infant schools, says a study published yesterday.

A survey by the National Foundation for Educational Research also found nearly half the infant schools questioned and a quarter of the junior schools taught maths for under three quarters of an hour a day.

The study of almost 400 schools in the autumn of 1996 points to wide differences in the way the basics are taught. The time spent on maths lessons varied from 12 minutes a day in one infant school to nearly an hour and a quarter a day in 2 per cent of infant schools.

The NFER research follows the Government's outercy task force advice last month that all primary schools teach maths for an hour every day. The Office for Standards in Education's annual report published on Wednesday said education remained a "lottery".

Sue Harris, a senior research officer for NFER who carried out the report, said: "The fact that there is greater variation on the time spent teaching maths is surprising. But responses did not take account of the time spent teaching maths under the guise of other subjects."

She said some schools may also have been using thematic project work to teach maths.

A large number of schools taught in line with the Government's recommendations—with 36 per cent of infants and 49 per cent of juniors teaching maths for between 48 minutes and an hour a day.

A spokesman for Ofsted said: "This is another bit of research that reiterates the need for further progress."

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Manchester mourns tragedy of Busby Babes

Scores of Manchester United fans laid flowers beneath a statue of the team's former manager Sir Matt Busby at Old Trafford yesterday to remember the Busby Babes, who died in the Munich air disaster 40 years ago.

The aircraft crashed in a blizzard at Munich Airport in 1958, killing 23 of its passengers including eight young Manchester United players who were returning home after their victory in the European Cup quarter final against Red Star Belgrade.

Last night a special memorial service was to be held in Manchester Cathedral to mark the tragedy. A minute's silence will be held at Manchester United's home match against Bolton today at 3.04pm - the time of the air disaster.



Memorial: Flowers left yesterday at Manchester United's Old Trafford for victims of the 1958 Munich air disaster

Photograph: News Team

Japanese fads condemn pets to mass slaughter

An animal welfare scandal in Japan, where 800,000 domestic pets are being slaughtered each year after being abandoned by their owners, will be exposed on a BBC radio programme today.

Im Burrell reports.

He added: "It's not that the Japanese don't like animals; they are very sentimental about them. But it's a very romanticised, anthropomorphic idea and has nothing to do with the fact that dogs need walking and they hate and they tend to make a lot of mess."

The large numbers of unwanted pets are made worse by the fact that cats and dogs in Japan are rarely neutered.

Elizabeth Oliver, a British animal lover who has set up the Ark animal refuge in Japan, said Japanese people traditionally have not kept dogs but they became fashionable in the 1980s.

"They looked around for what the popular dog was and then these hooms started. There used to be the sheltie boom, then the beagle boom

The astonishing death rate of Japanese pets has been attributed by animal welfare groups to rapidly changing trends in the ownership of certain pets, which are no longer wanted once they go out of fashion.

Recent favourites have included golden retrievers and labradors, which are the currently fad, and Siberian huskies. The breeds are unsuitable for the typically confined apartments and are often kept outside.

Landlords are exceptionally strict on the keeping of animals and many pet-owners are forced to give up their animals when they move.

In all, 307,000 cats and 235,000 dogs were put down in Japan last year.

Action is hardly ever taken against the owners. In 1996, only one prosecution for cruelty was brought in the whole of Japan.

The scale of the animal slaughter is put into further perspective when compared to the death rates of domestic pets in other countries. In Britain, 17,000 stray dogs were put down last year.

A team from BBC Radio's *Asia File* recently visited some of the dog and cat pounds in Japan and were horrified by the conditions the animals were kept in before being put down.

One terrier was delivered to the pound by its owner with parcel tape around its jaws, and a notice around its neck saying: "This dog bites". No action was taken against the owner.

In Osaka, single cages contain up to 38 dogs, which are exterminated within three days of arrival. Hugh Levinson, the programme's producer, said: "These dogs were going absolutely out, jumping on top of each other. Some had their fur



Death row: A dog awaiting its fate at a Japanese pound

then the busby boom and currently it's the golden retriever boom, which is just on the wane, and it's going into labradors, cavalier spaniels," she said. "They change - out with this year's fashion and in with next year's."

Hideo Yamazaki, of the Japanese prime minister's office, said: "Our laws on animal protection and management generally have the aim of aiding the welfare of animals..."

"It doesn't follow that because the number of prosecutions is low, there is a lot of cruelty towards animals in Japan or that the Japanese don't care for animals."

• *Asiafile* is on Radio 4 at 11.30am today.

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Prescott launches into sleaze in local government

The sleaze that can be generated by one-party domination in local government must be tackled, John Prescott, the Deputy Prime Minister, said yesterday. Anthony Bevis, Political Editor, reports on the Government's concerted counter-attack.

A Government paper on the revitalisation of local democracy is to be published by Mr Prescott, Secretary of State for Environment, Transport and the Regions, and Hilary Armstrong, the local government minister, on Monday.

But in a speech to the Labour local government conference in Scarborough last night, Mr Prescott said: "We must be honest that there are problems. There is too little participation by the electorate in local elections, and in local government between elections."

"In some cases, we are victims of our own successes. A huge one-party majority can lead to internal strife, complacency and, in a few cases, a failure of public standards. We must tackle these problems."

Monday's paper on local democracy - "radical stuff" - would be the first of three, with others to follow on value for money and Nolan-style reforms tackling standards of conduct in town halls.

"On Monday," Mr Prescott said, "we will invite comments on how we can increase public

involvement in decision-making between elections; whether voting can be made easier for people, including voting at more convenient locations or times; and whether the composition of our councils can be made more representative, something we, as a party selecting candidates, must address."

He also raised the question of whether there should be paid local council "cabinets", saying they needed to look at "sharpening up the distinction between the executive and representative roles of local councillors".

Mr Prescott added his weight, too, to the initiative being undertaken with Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, and other ministers like David Blunkett, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, and Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, on rundown estates, outlined in yesterday's *Independent*.

He is expected next week to unveil plans for the 900-home Millennium Village at Greenwich, which will provide a model for improvements in urban living.

"We must deal with education, transport, crime prevention, jobs, housing and the whole range of issues which combine to bring to life attractive, vibrant communities," he told the Scarborough delegates.

"We cannot deal with problems in deprived areas by dealing with housing, education, crime, or jobs in isolation."

"Gordon Brown will be working with myself and other ministers to draw together pro-

grammes to turn round some of our most difficult housing areas. We are looking at... cstatus hit by a whole mixture of problems.

"This will be an imaginative attempt to tackle the root causes of poverty, rather than just tinkering with the symptoms... this [is a] New Deal for Whole Communities."

Tony Blair, who will address the conference tomorrow, with a night's break to get over his Washington jet-lag - is expected to return to the issue of sleaze and corruption in local government; leaving no doubt about his determination to crack down on dubious town hall practices that give the party a bad name.



Seal of approval: John Prescott breaks from the local government conference to visit Scarborough's Sea Life Centre Photograph: Tony Bartholomew/UNP

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Conservatives are anti-Semitic racists, says veteran wet

Tory bigotry came under severe attack yesterday from a former Conservative MP, Sir Julian Critchley, who told the *Oldie* magazine that while many members were anti-Semitic, many more were prejudiced against other racial groups.

Sir Julian, who has been a *bête noire* of the Conservative Party over many years, was MP for Aldershot until last year, when he retired after a long illness.

In his *Oldie* interview, he said: "The Tory Party shows every sign of becoming a right-wing nump, obscurantist and na-

der that I stayed with them as long as I did."

Nevertheless, in spite of his long-standing and well-publicised antipathy towards the estate agents and car-dealers who took over the parliamentary party during the Thatcher years, Sir Julian remained a Conservative.

As for the Prime Minister, Sir Julian says: "He has dragged the Labour Party kicking and screaming into the last part of the 20th century, or perhaps into the 21st, and that is no mean achievement."

"He has helped to destroy Marxist Socialism, which of course was the bane of Labour, and he appears to have helped to shore up the monarchy when it was in danger."

He added: "To be honest, I think Blair is a very good thing, and if I were forced to choose between Blair and Hague, I would choose Blair."

Reflecting the old guard, patrician snobbery that persists in the Conservative ranks, Sir Julian said of the Thatcherite generation: "There were a lot of them. They were very obstreperous and you could make fun of them on the grounds that they were the sort of people who ate peas off their knives. It was quite deliberate satire which I used against certain people, for example, Tebbit, whom I dislike intensely. In my view, he is a savage man who is full of hatred."

"One way of pricking the bubble of Thatcherism - and by God she had enough sycophants around her - was to pretend that they were all as common as muck, which would annoy them intensely."

— Anthony Bevis



Critchley on the Tories: "By and large, most of them are so unattractive I wonder I stayed with them as long as I did... if I were forced to choose between Blair and Hague, I would choose Blair"

tionalist. They are not necessarily anti-Semitic, simply because it is not a big issue, but if you scratch them you will find that many of them are anti-Semitic.

"They are certainly anti-black. By and large, most of them are so unattractive I won-

Dobson chemist plea fails

Margaret Beckett has rejected an appeal by Frank Dobson to halt attempts by supermarkets to sell non-prescription medicines such as Beecham's and Neurofen at discount prices.

The Health Secretary wrote to the President of the Board of Trade warning that community chemists could be forced out of business by supermarkets if they are allowed to slash the price of a range of household medicines which do not require a prescription. But Mrs Beckett has ordered her ministers to reject an attempt to protect the profit margins of the chemists in the Competition Bill in the House of Lords on Monday.

Colin Brown

Cancer patients 'too polite' to ask for best treatment

Cancer patients are dying of politeness, according to the Patients Association. Jeremy Lawrence, Health Editor, asks if they need to get angry to get better.

In cancer, reticence can be a death sentence and good manners can delay recovery. Patients who press for the best treatments and don't take "no" for an answer have a better chance of survival.

Cathy Gritzer, chief executive of the Patients' Association, told the International Congress on Anti-Cancer Treatment in Paris yesterday: "Patients, in particular women, are dying of politeness."

"People with cancer should take the lead in ensuring they have access to the very best care available by becoming more knowledgeable and demanding about their treatment."

"We have a lot to learn from the Americans. We should be more assertive, saying to doctors 'tell me what this treatment is, and what are the alternatives?'"

"Clearly it is a dilemma if some treatments [such as expensive drugs] are not funded [by health authorities] but I think patients need to know that rather than being kept in ignorance."

The conference heard that the UK's cancer survival record was worse than many other European countries and the United

States. Ms Gritzer said the "yes, doctor" syndrome was one reason.

"It is because patients are not aware of what is available, what their choices are, where they can go for the best treatment," she said. The Patients' Association plans to work more closely with other medical charities and doctors to champion patients' rights, she added.

Research suggests that patients diagnosed with cancer differ in their coping strategies. Some take it in their stride while others react with hopelessness. Some studies have shown that patients with "fighting spirit" tend to do better but the term needs careful interpretation. It is a positive disease-can-be-fought response not a desperate, frightened, try-anything one. Evidence suggests that people who believe they are able to overcome their disease can tolerate higher doses of chemotherapy.

One of the commonest complaints of women with breast cancer is how their fear of the disease taking over their bodies was compounded by the way the medical system took over their lives.

Debbie Howells, wife of Tottenham Hotspur soccer player, David Howells, told the conference of her battle against ovarian cancer and urged other patients not to take everything doctors told them as gospel.

Ms Howells, 29, said: "I was lucky because I was asked to take part in a clinical trial at the Royal Marsden and received the best treatment."



In tune: Zoe Ball and Chris Evans at the Q Music Awards last year

Photograph: DM

Evans claims victory in breakfast war

Virgin Radio was claiming victory in the breakfast show ratings war yesterday after official listening figures showed Chris Evans had added double the number of new listeners to his show as Zoe Ball has added to Radio 1.

Evans, who bought Virgin Radio from Richard Branson in November for £84m, boosted his audience by 660,000 to 2.2m. Meanwhile, Radio 1 was able to claim that it remains the number one breakfast show, with an extra 280,000 listeners, taking Zoe Ball and partner Kevin Greening to an average audience of just under six million listeners.

However the news is not as good as it seems for the BBC. The two stations started their shows on the same day three months ago and at first the Ball-Greening pairing made the most impact. According to leaked unofficial figures, Radio 1 outstripped Evans with an extra 750,000 listeners in October. Either that was a statistical blip or the listeners didn't like what they heard because the unofficial figures show a half-million audience drop in November.

On the other hand, Evans's show has picked up listeners every month and over the quarter, it represents a startling



41 per cent increase. Evans's audience jump is so big it has enabled the whole of Virgin Radio to increase its audience by 23 per cent.

John Pearson, Virgin Radio's chief executive said yesterday that the result was "tremendous" and hinted that the station would be campaigning to transfer its frequency from AM to FM nationwide.

Radio 1 was emphasising that it had increased the number of young listeners tuning in and said Zoe Ball had reversed its decline.

— Paul McCann

Japanese cars made in UK are less reliable than imports, survey shows

There are huge differences between the reliability of some Japanese cars built in Britain and imports from Japan, according to a survey released yesterday.

An analysis of the maintenance records of 88,000 vehicles leased by the Lex Service group to hundreds of companies also showed that in a year there were nearly 25 mechanical breakdowns per hundred cars. That compares with a figure last year of 20.

Most surprisingly, cars made by Toyota and Nissan were found to have differing rates of reliability between home-made and imported models. The 700 Carina Es on the fleet built at Toyota's Burnaston plant in Derbyshire last year suffered 23 breakdowns per 100 vehicles compared with 5.8 for the imported Corolla model.

On average, Toyota recorded a reliability rate of 16.4. However, the company chal-

lenged the results. Toyota yesterday pledged to launch an investigation into quality standards at its Burnaston plant where the new Avensis model is made. Sources close to the company also said the Lex results may have been unduly affected by a batch of faulty spark plugs last year.

Garel Rhys, motor industry professor at Cardiff University, said that the very high standards demanded by the Japanese pub-

lic may account for the much of the difference. "Historically, Japan has had the best-quality components and production methods," he said.

Nissan was also hit hard by the results. The Primers produced at Sunderland had a breakdown rate of 23 per 100 cars. This compared badly with Nissan's imported Almera, which suffered only 1.1 breakdowns per 100 vehicles. A spokesman for Nissan

said that its own research showed that the Primera breakdown rate was in fact only one-fifth that of the survey's.

Mitsubishi turned out to be the most reliable manufacturer - recording only 5.8 breakdowns per 100 vehicles. Citroen proved to be the worst - with a figure of 44.

According to the research, Mercedes' latest C-Class is less reliable than the model it replaced, the 190, which showed only

one breakdown per 100 vehicles. Experts say this is not unusual. "With a car that is a few years old it is always being refined. With a newer car there are always little things that gradually get put right," said Bob Procter, the RAC's technical service engineer.

— Randeep Ramesh, Transport Correspondent
Toyota cuts costs, page 20

£10 Conran lunch

THE INDEPENDENT



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The Independent and Independent on Sunday in association with Terence Conran are delighted to offer readers the opportunity to enjoy lunch or early evening supper at six of London's top restaurants throughout January and February for £10

From Monday January 5th until Saturday February 28th, the following establishments are offering readers a two course lunch or early evening supper for just £10 per person.

How to Book

To participate in the offer simply collect one token (tokens will be printed every day until Saturday February 28th) and then telephone the restaurant of your choice quoting yourself as an Independent diner. On your arrival at the restaurant you should present your token in order to qualify for the offer. Each token is valid for a complete table booking. The tokens will be valid for one week only, and will be dated accordingly. To continue to participate in the offer, simply collect a token from the week in which you wish to dine. Pre-booking is essential and all bookings are subject to availability.

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Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm

Le Pont de la Tour Bar & Grill 36d Shad Thames, London, SE1 2YE
0171 403 8403
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm

Mezzo 100 Wardour Street, London, W1V 3LE
0171 314 4000
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 6pm - 7pm
closed Saturday lunchtime, open Sunday 12pm - 4pm

Quaglino's 16 Bury Street, St James's, London, SW1Y 6AL
0171 930 6767
Lunch 12noon - 3pm, early evening supper 5.30pm - 6.30pm

Zinc Bar & Grill 21 Heddon Street, London, W1R 7LF
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هنا من الأصل

Ghosts of Brecht's women lay claim to his plays

The celebrations in Germany of the birth 100 years ago of the country's greatest modern dramatist are being marred by claims that Bertolt Brecht's plays were really the work of his mistresses. Ghosts are being awakened, reports Imre Karacs from Bonn.

East Germany is dead. Its revolutionary playwright lies in a Berlin cemetery, pinned down by a stake driven through his heart. Bertolt Brecht's Dracula-style send-off, at his own behest because of his paranoia about being buried alive, was regarded as a little strange in the workers' paradise in 1956. But as the ghosts of the women upon whom he had feasted return to haunt the bard, the metaphor is beginning to seem thoroughly apt.

Next Tuesday marks the 100th birthday of Germany's greatest modern dramatist. Celebrations are in full swing, theatres are dusting off scripts unrehearsed for decades. Letters are unearthed purporting to prove that Brecht was not half as dedicated a Communist as previously thought. And, just as rehabilitation is at hand, along comes a party pooper from the United States claiming that most of the plays attributed to Brecht were in fact written by the author's dotting concubines.

It has always been beyond dispute that the Marxist icon tyrannised women, drove them to suicide and forced them to abort his children. But only now is it emerging that Brecht exploited the spirit of his companions, too, harnessing their creative energies to the glory of his name.

According to John Fuegi, an American scholar, Brecht's women penned most of the words in such hits as *The Threepenny Opera* and *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. The Brecht collective, Mr Fuegi argues, was in reality a capitalist enterprise. Brecht was the master, and his women the assembly line workers who toiled night and day, expecting nothing in exchange but sexual gratification from a spindly little man afflicted with a rasping voice and a serious hygiene problem.

Mr Fuegi's first attempt to explode the Brecht myth, in a book published in the US in 1994, was denounced by the German literary establishment. The International Brecht Society, of which he was a founding member, spotted 600 errors in his work.



A scene from the 1931 film of *The Threepenny Opera*, and a programme leaflet. It is claimed Elisabeth Hauptmann wrote most of the play



and drummed him out from its midst. The author has spent the last three years removing the howlers with the help of a German expert. The result is an improved German edition entitled *Brecht & Co*, fortified with testimonies from witnesses and buttressed by more than 1,000 footnotes. It has just been published, in time for the centenary.

Brecht's most important muse, Mr Fuegi states, was Elisabeth Hauptmann, credited by the playwright with the translation of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*. But Hauptmann, a literary editor, in fact wrote "80 to 90 per cent" of the "Brecht" adaptation - *The Threepenny Opera* - which catapulted him to fame. She became Brecht's life-long mistress, accompanying the writer to exile in Denmark, Russia, and the US.

Hauptmann was to co-author many other "Brecht" plays, without ever appearing on the cover of any of them. Her niece and legal heir is now suing the publishers for back-dated royalties which, according to Mr Fuegi, might run into "seven or eight figures".

Margarete Steffin, a writer who Brecht bedded in 1931, is thought to have been the inspiration behind *Galileo* and *The Good Woman of Setzu*. She accompanied the émigré to Moscow, where she died en route to the United States in 1941.

Finally, Mr Fuegi cites the influence of Ruth Berlau, a Danish stage director, who joined the Brecht coterie in 1933 and fol-

lowed him all the way to East Berlin. While she was not roped into writing, Berlau's ideas came to the fore in production, an important dimension to the Brecht experience.

In all this time Brecht also had a wife, Helene Weigel, who was to become the custodian of the Brecht archives after her husband's death, as well as the head of the Berliner Ensemble, the theatre in East Berlin founded by Brecht and dedicated to his oeuvre. Two other members of the extended family, Paula Bankhofer and Marianne Zoff, took care that the playwright's genes were propagated, but are believed to have contributed little to his literary legacy.

In this collective, says Mr Fuegi, were born some of the century's greatest plays. Brecht was full of ideas, but he did not have the attention span to carry them through. He would start the women out on a theme, and they would come back with a complete dialogue. The creative tension in the workshop stemmed from Brecht's manipulative skills; mutual jealousy kept the employees on their toes.

For all his progressive ideas, Brecht was old-fashioned in sexual politics. Relations between the genders, he declared, was a contract in which "the man can demand a tremendous amount and the woman must give a tremendous amount". He got away with it perhaps because, as his daughter recalled later, "he could charm the birds off the trees".

هكذا من الأصل



Life of drama: Brecht, and his wife, Helene Weigel, at the May Day demonstration in Berlin in 1954. Preparations for the 100th anniversary of Brecht's birth are in full swing, but a US scholar has dampened the fun. Photograph: Hulton Getty/AGF

That leaves Mr Fuegi having to rely on scraps of documents and hearsay, because the down-trodden proletariat of Brecht & Co never complained. Critics have, therefore, been able to charge that his book is "fuelled by hatred", though they can no longer fault his scholarship. Mr Fuegi, the son of a Swiss waiter at the Savoy, has spent

33 years ploughing through the Brecht archives. But that still makes him an interloper in the eyes of German literary circles - whom Mr Fuegi likens to the Mafia - and a threat to the earnings of Suhrkamp Verlag, the Frankfurt-based publisher which holds Brecht's global copyright. Some German academics are now

willing to concede that Mr Fuegi may have a point, but not Suhrkamp. As the company's chief, Siegfried Unseld, recently proclaimed: "Brecht's works stem from no one else but Brecht." But it has been noted that Hauptmann's name, at least, has surfaced on the cover of some of the latest reprints.

Victory for Spain's lusty roadside bulls

Spain's Supreme Court has finally granted a definitive reprieve for the Osborne bulls - those vast steel Spanish brandy adverts that bedevil the country and have become one of its most potent images.

The announcement brings to a happy conclusion a nine-year campaign to defend an icon of almost mythical significance. The bulls "have superseded their original function as a commercial trademark, to become an integral and decorative part of the national landscape", said the Supreme Court.

Osborne blacked out its name and product from the bulls' flanks in 1989 when a Motorways Law killed off roadside advertising, but the po-faced so-

cialist transport minister tossed the concession aside and said the bulls themselves must go.

The government then trampled underfoot a massive "save the bulls" campaign and fined the company £5,000 in 1994 for leaving the bulls still standing. But the final decision was left to the Supreme Court.

Numerous artists out of solidarity collaborated in a lavish celebratory coffee-table book, *A Big Black Bull*; an American photographer crisscrossed the country for three years snapping the remaining 97 of the original 500 examples of the world's best-known taureau image, and an exhibition wowed Madrid's smart Fine Arts Circle.

The bull-shaped steel board-



Famous silhouette: The Osborne bull

ings enjoy a reputation for conferring virile powers, and are legendary nocturnal rendezvous for young couples who lie in the

moonlit shadows of the vast, arid, silhouette.

Such an amorous encounter was immortalised in Bigas Luna's hit film *Jamon Jamon* in which, after the breakdown of the relationship, the young hero returns to the scene and strikes the steel beast's gigantic testicles with a stick until they crash to the ground - an unforgettable image of rage and impotence.

This must have been what the Supreme Court had in mind when it decided: "Aesthetic and cultural interests must prevail in deciding that the bulls be preserved... the image has entered the European consciousness as covert and subliminal advertising."

— Elizabeth Nash, Madrid



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Nine dead in Sri Lanka suicide blast

At least nine people were killed yesterday when a female suicide bomber detonated explosives strapped to her body at a military checkpoint in Sri Lanka's capital Colombo, police and witnesses said.

The explosion happened only hours after the Prince of Wales left the island, following a four-day visit to mark Sri Lanka's 50th independence anniversary. Government forces had been on high alert for attacks by Tamil Tiger rebels during the anniversary festivities.

A senior police official at the blast site said the dead included three civilians, one of whom was the bomber, who detonated the explosives after being asked to step out of a van at the checkpoint.

The force of the explosion scattered body parts over a wide area. Sand bags stacked around the check post were splattered with blood. The nine dead included two soldiers and three airmen. Officials had originally put the toll at seven, but increased the figure after recovering body parts.

— Reuters, Colombo

The Blair holiday snaps: Cherie's record of her US trip with Tony – February '98



Bill and Hillary greeting us at the White House as Tony and I arrive for dinner on Thursday Photographs: AP



Elton John hits just the right note, as always, entertaining everyone at the state dinner held in our honour



Just look at those frocks. This is Tony (left), me, Bill and Hillary posing for photographs after we arrived for dinner



Tony talking with Edward Kennedy at a breakfast in the Blair House in Washington – don't they look handsome?



A terrific reception for Tony and Bill from the students of Montgomery Blair High School in Silver Springs



Ooh ... my shoes! Hillary and me in the Grand Foyer for the welcome ceremony



Tony and Bill at a rally – they always do see eye to eye Photograph: EPA/AP



Oh dear, it's that Monica Lewinsky, with her stepmother, moving quickly on ...

British stiff upper lip trembles at the Tony and Bill love-in

The Blairs and the Clintons reinvented the 'special relationship' this week with a love-fest in Washington. The Prime Minister said he wanted to see an end to 'quaint, old-fashioned' Britain, a nation of bowler hats and stiff upper lips. Mary Dejevsky reports.

Effusive in his thanks for the warmth of Bill's welcome, Tony drummed home how "proud" he was to have Bill "not only as

a colleague but as a friend. Bill spoke of "comradeship and partnership", of shared visions and shared aims. In summit mode, they quoted FDR and Churchill. In mutual support mode, Bill said Tony was "so wise and so right".

And, like teenagers, they joshed about it. Did Bill appreciate Tony's compliments? "Of course not," he laughed at the closing press conference. "He should have come here and dumped all over me."

The lighthearted atmosphere of informality was most marked at Thursday's White House banquet, where 240 guests – the largest number at any White House banquet since Mr Clinton came to office

– donned dinner jackets and ballgowns for a relaxed and almost informal occasion beneath the chandeliers of the East Room.

The guests spanned the worlds of showbusiness – Barbara Streisand, Tom Hanks and Harrison Ford – politics and punditry, with a larger-than-usual contingent of journalists: from star television anchor Peter Jennings and socialite editor, John Kennedy Jr., who memorably scolded his relatives in print as "poster-boys for bad behaviour" to the trio of British editors in New York, Tina Brown, Anna Wintour and Liz Tilberis. "It's a bit like a wedding party," Elton John told reporters. "Like the wildest wedding" he had been

to, said Tom Hanks: "good hand, good food."

With tables settings and candle clusters chosen personally by Hillary Clinton in the first hostess role she has often shunned, the guests sat down to a menu described as "new American" – lean and fresh but combining an improbable range of flavours. The entertainment came from Elton John and Stevie Wonder – with a knighthood for British-born American entertainer Bob Hope announced in advance as a bridge between the generations.

But it was in the toasts that the new-style Special Relationship came into its own. They could joke about history: Mr Clinton

about a special relationship that began with "slashing and burning" in 1783; Mr Blair about the briefing paper for White House staff which told them how to pronounce his name and ticked "yes" against the question: "English-speaking?"

Mr Blair took the opportunity to do a hard sell on his "new" nation. "For years we were known more for what we once were than what we could be. For years we were content to rest on former glories, rather than the self-confidence of present day achievement."

"I know what many used to think of us: we were quaint, a little old-fashioned – a country of pageantry and ceremony and stiff

upper lips." Now, he said, "Britain is a nation unafraid of change – confident, looking forward."

The two leaders had been mobbed like at a suburban school that had ties with a school in Bristol. Mr Blair dispensed with his prepared script to talk of the limitless opportunities for the next generation. Mr Clinton reminisced about visiting Bristol during his spell at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar.

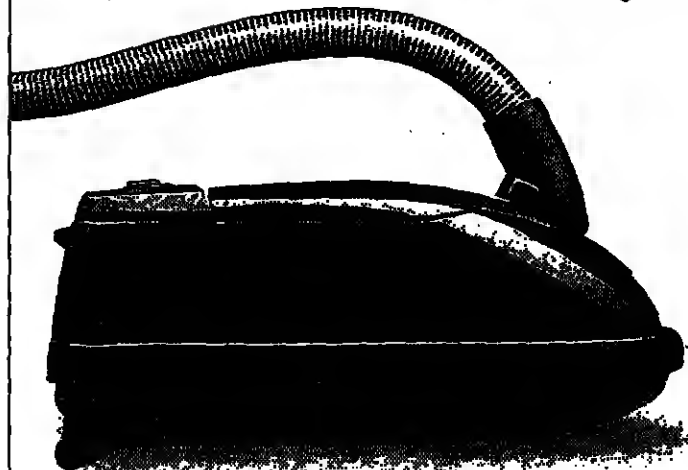
The wives, by Cherie's choice it was said, remained in the background, low-key professionals shunning the reflected limelight of their husbands, except to sparkle as gold-clad ornaments at the banquet.

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Trust in God: Women at prayer in a Baghdad mosque yesterday. Many of Iraq's neighbours fear that an attack by the West could lead to Iraq's break-up Photograph: Enric Martí/AP

Force would stir Middle East cauldron

A war against Saddam Hussein is more possible than at any time in the last seven years. Britain and the United States are keen to turn up the pressure and clearly will not shrink from military action. But such action does not just have implications for Saddam Hussein, argues Steve Crawshaw, recently in the Gulf.

It is the art of diplomacy: pretend that everybody agrees with you, even when they manifestly do not. Thus it was with Robin Cook in the Gulf this week.

Even though France and Russia have repeatedly made clear their deep opposition to military action, Mr Cook was keen to imply that everybody is on board.

His standard line emphasises the fact that Britain is "leaving no diplomatic avenue unexplored". But if all else fails, he has repeatedly insisted, then blame will lie entirely with Saddam Hussein.

Mr Cook argued: "If we walk away from this and leave Saddam Hussein in possession of these weapons that could wipe out whole cities, then the prospect of war in the region is much greater than if we use military force on this occasion."

On the one hand, it can all be seen as mere grandstanding by a superpower and an ex-superpower who both want to demon-

strate their macho qualities. It is unfortunate that the United States is upping the ante against Saddam Hussein at a time when the US President has so many obvious reasons for wishing the spotlight to swing away from his personal life.

Britain is not merely Washington's poodle on this point. Standing up for principles is not merely a childish thing that grown-up countries learn to put away. France, Russia and China all have a mixture of commercial and political reasons for wishing to lay off Baghdad.

Fear of bloodshed has less to do with it than wanting to stay on good terms with the regime. Britons still feel ashamed of actions by Neville Chamberlain that came as such a relief at the time; "peace in our time" is not

necessarily something to be proud of. That is doubly true if the threat of force persuades a tyrant to back down.

Nevertheless, the consequences of military action against Iraq go well beyond reducing the threat of chemical and biological warfare being loosed upon the world. If Saddam Hussein is humiliated militarily, then that could spell an end to the Saddam regime. So far, so good. But, if the Saddam regime begins to crumble, then the chances of an uprising are high.

Iraq is, in the words of Robin Cook, a "lively coalition of different groups - the Kurds, the marsh Arabs and so forth". If those very disparate groups rebel, question marks hang over the survival of Iraq itself. And that is a prospect which fills

Iraq's neighbours with horror.

Diplomats in Riyadh note the "growing sympathy" among Saudis for their Iraqi neighbours. Worries about Iraqi civilian suffering are real. None the less, the Saudis were as on-message as could have been hoped for, with a Cookian phrase about how Saddam must understand that if things go wrong, he will be the author of his own destruction.

For the Saudis and for others in the region, the potential disintegration of Iraq is a higher price to pay than the continuance in power of Saddam Hussein. Mr Cook, when addressing the same problem, sounded almost insouciant. He noted: "If Saddam were to be seriously undermined - in a way which we would welcome - there could be consequences in

terms of the break-up of Iraq. They [Arab leaders] don't want to see that happen."

In London or Washington, the bringing to heel of a dictator seems a laudable aim. Among Iraq's neighbours, however, the destabilising implications are high on the agenda. It is an important divide. If this week's diplomatic huffing and puffing is successful, then Saddam will climb down off his pedestal without any military action. But if push comes to military shove, the knock-on effects will be enormous. The paradox remains: for some, Iraq ruled by a despot is the lesser evil, compared with a chaotic Iraq suffering from a vacuum of power. Wanting to be rid of Saddam is logical; but being worried about an Iraq without Saddam is logical, too.

Balloonists break record

Determined that their journey would not be wasted, the three balloonists on the failed round-the-world attempt broke a second record yesterday. China's refusal to allow Breitling Orbiter 2 to enter its airspace meant that there was no chance of the crew, including Briton Andy Elton, meeting their original goal. But the balloon broke the record for the longest non-stop unrefueled flight after 11am yesterday, shattering a record set by the experimental aircraft *Voyager* in 1986. On Tuesday, the Breitling team broke the world record for the longest time spent in the air by a balloon.

— Paul Gilham

Germany passes spy law

Germany's upper house of parliament approved a controversial constitutional amendment that would restore police surveillance powers outlawed since the Nazi era. The amendment, much criticised by civil rights groups, will give police broad eavesdropping powers withheld after the war in reaction to the arbitrary rule of the Gestapo. Electronic surveillance is currently only allowed in Germany if there is an overwhelming suspicion that a crime is on the verge of being committed.

— Reuters, Bonn

Scot dies on SA peak

A Scottish climber fell to his death while abseiling down a rock face in the vicinity of the Lion's Head peak in Cape Town, South African police said. Twin brothers Gavin and Mark Rye, 27, of Edinburgh, were on holiday when the accident occurred, a police spokesman said. The craggy slopes of Cape Town's Table Mountain are popular among climbers from around the world.

— Reuters, Cape Town

Political street game

City officials in Lagos renamed the street in front of the United States embassy after the US Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, two weeks after a New York City corner was named for the murdered wife of a Nigerian dissident. The renaming of Eleke Crescent was done "in honour of the indefatigable visionary leader", a local official said. In spite of the objections from the Nigerian government, a Manhattan street corner opposite the Nigerian United Nations Mission was unveiled as "Kadiri Abiola Corner" last month after the wife of Moshood Abiola, the apparent winner of Nigeria's 1993 presidential election, who is now in jail.

— AP, Lagos

Calf breaks for freedom

German police said they used an automatic weapon to shoot a calf that fled from an abattoir in an escape attempt that contrasts starkly with the happy ending of British boar Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid. The calf absconded after being delivered to a slaughterhouse in Fulda, in central Germany. A police spokesman said it seized its opportunity and fled, running for several miles across fields and getting close to a railway line and a main road before being killed.

— Reuters, Fulda

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Republicans heal the rift in Australia

Australia's constitutional convention was nearly derailed by battles between the various republican groups. But Robert Milliken in Sydney says a consensus is now emerging over how to replace the Queen.

After a week of acrimonious debate, the Constitutional Convention reached its halfway point yesterday, apparently heading for a compromise on the question of an alternative head of state.

The sticking point has not been the monarchists, who comprise less than half the delegates to the convention in the capital, Canberra.

They have vowed to vote against any republican model, however "minimalist" its proposed changes to the 1901 constitution that has a monarch at its centre.

The biggest division has been among the republicans themselves, over the question of whether the head of state should be elected directly, or by both houses of parliament.

At one point, several republicans - mainly from Western Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory - threatened to join the monarchists at the convention's final vote next week, unless their fellow republicans agreed to the direct election formula.

Their target was the Australian Republican Movement, the biggest republican lobby group, led by Malcolm Turnbull, a Sydney lawyer and merchant banker.

They accused Mr Turnbull's group of elitism owing to its insistence that parliament must choose the head of state.

"We've had a gutful of the Turnbull model being rammed down our throats," declared Shane Stone, chief minister of the Northern Territory.

Mr Turnbull's group argues that a directly elected president

could become a rival power to the prime minister in Australia's Westminster-style democracy.

Late yesterday, both republican factions appeared to have kissed and made up.

There is talk of two possible compromises. One would allow Australians to nominate choices for the head of state in a plebiscite, after which parliament would make the final decision.

The other compromise envisages a council of "eminent Australians", which could appoint and also dismiss the head of state on the advice of the prime minister.

This latter plan would be the driest and most "minimal" change of all. John Howard, the Prime Minister, an opponent of constitutional change, on Thursday called it the "least worst" republican model.

Mr Howard has promised to put whatever model the convention agrees on to a referendum next year, with a deadline of January 2001 for the introduction of a republic if that proves to be the outcome of the referendum.

Mr Howard has been a political loser at the convention. One by one, several ministers in his right-of-centre Liberal Party government have come out in favour of a republic, including his most senior colleague, Peter Costello, the Treasurer (finance minister). Another prominent Liberal, Tony Abbott, a former leader of the monarchist camp, switched sides during the week.

Newspapers have portrayed Mr Howard as isolated, with photographs of him sitting glumly on the front bench of the old Parliament House, where the convention is being held.

The convention seems to have fired Australia's imagination. Delegates have been flooded with messages from around the country urging them to vote one way or the other when the convention ends next Friday.



Test case: Chat-show host Oprah Winfrey, whose comments about mad cow disease have landed her in court in Texas facing a lawsuit of nearly £7m. Photograph: Eric Gray/AP

Why Amarillo's cowboys are not all mad at Oprah

Oprah Winfrey's beef trial in Amarillo conjures up images of angry cowboys circling the courthouse waiting to lasso her and drag her through the streets. But David Osborne finds most Texas ranchers ride Dodge four-by-fours these days, not horses. And not all of them want Oprah to lose.

Each spring, cattleman Jerry Curtis spends a week doing what most of us still understand to be ranching. At a friend's spread in New Mexico, he and his wife, Donna, ride horses, round up steers and wrestle them down for brand-

ing. But they go for fun. As a living, he laughs, the place "don't pay worth a toot".

What does pay a toot, for sure, is his own cattle-raising business here in the panhandle of Texas. On about 160 acres just outside Hereford, in Deaf Smith County - Mr Curtis runs Beef-Tech. This is a feeding-station where young animals spend their last months being fattened before being shipped off for slaughter.

To grasp the sheer intensity of Mr Curtis's operation, you have only to glance across his property. It is a checkerboard of iron-fenced pens, each one something with rump and fur. On a relatively small acreage, there are no fewer than 18,500 head of cattle. Squint a little, and you can imagine walking across their backs from one edge of the pens to the other.

Nor do these animals belong to Mr Curtis. More stock broker than rancher, he is rearing them for other people, individuals from across the United States, who pay him to buy and feed them up. If all goes well they get a decent return when he sends them to market.

Sometimes, of course, things do not go well. Beef prices have taken some knocks of late, notably because of economic problems in Asia and previously in Mexico, which have damaged US exports. And then, almost two years ago, there was a slightly more unusual episode.

It was April 1996, when the talk-show queen Oprah Winfrey dedicated one of her programmes to mad cow disease in Britain. More importantly, she swore off burgers for good after one of her guests suggest-



Firm on beef: An Amarillo restaurant defies Oprah

ed that bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) was bound to surface in America some day. That has landed her this week in a courtroom in Amarillo, where she faces a \$10.6m (£6.58m) lawsuit premised on new and never-before-tested foodstuff disparagement laws.

Like every other Texan cattleman, Mr Curtis was upset by the programme. In the days following its showing, beef cattle futures on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange took a dive. And what has to be realised, he says, is that it was not so much the ranchers who suffered but those who had invested in the cattle on farms like his. Some were hurt badly enough to get out of beef rearing for good.

Although he insists it should be counted as just one of those unpredictable turns that will always affect the beef market, he has no doubt her comments had an impact. "The way they presented it, I don't think people were given the whole picture and all the facts. It was something of a scare deal and I think some people have stopped eating beef."

He did not, however, join

those suing Ms Winfrey. There are risks in taking her to court, not least that if she loses, she might, in her anger, encourage her fans to boycott beef. Given that her show attracts about 20 million viewers, that could be genuinely damaging. He adds: "The disparagement case will be hard to prove, because they will have to show she knowingly lied and I don't think she's that kind of lady."

Naively, perhaps, Mr Curtis hopes the trial will leave the public thinking not about BSE but appreciating the efforts that the industry takes to keep beef safe. His conviction that BSE has been kept out of the American herd is impressive. Tall and lanky with huge hands, Mr Curtis concludes with apparent confidence: "Never say never, but I think it would be impossible for us to get BSE".

US general admits cable car crash jet was flying too low

Bending to the fury of Italian public opinion, US military officials finally acknowledged yesterday that the aircraft which crashed into a cable-car line in the Dolomites and killed 20 people this week had been flying well below the minimum permitted altitude.

Brigadier-General Guy Vander Linden, the senior Marines commander in Europe, sought to mend the cracks that have opened in relations between Italy and the United States by overruling earlier statements by his colleagues, who had suggested there was nothing untoward about a combat aircraft shooting beneath cable-car lines at the speed of sound.

"The point of impact is well below the approved minimum altitude," he said. He also sought to mend a disagreement with the Italian Defence Ministry about the plane's flight path. He acknowledged that the plane was not on "the centreline of the flight track" when it hit the cable car, merely within a 10-nautical-mile-wide corridor.

The general's finely-tuned words were symptomatic of the tension that has built up between the two countries since

ward about a combat aircraft shooting beneath cable-car lines at the speed of sound.

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The general's finely-tuned words were symptomatic of the tension that has built up between the two countries since



Tuesday's accident. Despite pledges of full co-operation, the two countries have fallen out on everything from the causes of

The twisted wreckage of the cable car which crashed on Tuesday, after its wires were severed by a US jet

Photograph: AFP

were forced to admit they had removed the plane's flight recorder after it returned to base even though it had been impounded by the Italian judiciary. They gave the flight recorder back after an angry denunciation by the public prosecutor.

A special military team flown out from the Marine base in

Cherry Point, North Carolina, is working on its own investigation and intends to press any charges that arise in the United States.

Yesterday, leaks from Aviano, the US military base where the aircraft was based, suggested that the pilot, Richard Ashby, 30, was having problems with his altimeter at the time of the impact and did not intentionally dip so low into the valley above Cavalese. The Italian lawyer representing the crew also maintained that the cable car lines were not marked on two of the three maps in the plane.

— Andrew Gumbel, Rome

Friends in the North call to tear down the Korean wall

North Korea wants to open up Berlin Wall style holes in the heavily-militarised barrier that has long divided the Korean peninsula, according to one of its senior diplomats.

It might sound like a magnanimous gesture from the highly secretive Stalinist state, long secluded from the rest of the world by ideology. However, the barrier it wants to demolish actually belongs to its rival South Korea. The South regards the North as an aggressive adversary, possibly armed with nuclear weapons, and is unlikely to be impressed.

Less than four years ago an official from the North threatened to turn Seoul into a "sea of fire" after talks broke down. Two years later, the North also threatened to test its No Dong missiles and mounted a show of aggression by sending armed troops into the demilitarised zone.

North Korea's ambassador to Russia, Son Song Pil, was yesterday quoted by Itar-Tass saying that the move could eventually lead to the destruction of the entire wall - a development which would constitute a significant step towards peace between the two Koreas and even reunification.

His remarks probably owe much to diplomatic gamesmanship. But they follow several recent signs that the bitterly hostile relations between the two Koreas - one as resolutely communist as the other is capitalist - may at last be easing. 45 years after the Korean War. Both sides are still technically at war.

Last year, North Korean negotiators sat down with American, South Korean, and Chinese officials for the first substantive peace talks in 40 years. Despite a long record of crowing at the shortcomings of the South, the

famine-stricken and backward North has been unexpectedly quiet about South Korea's sudden plunge from boom to melt-down.

Fears about the North's nuclear programme have eased after it agreed to suspend sensitive development work in exchange for light-water nuclear reactors from the South, Japan and the US. And South Korea's president-elect, Kim Dae-jung, has been talking about increased exchanges and economic co-operation with his Northern neighbours.

According to Itar-Tass, North Korea "proposes making passages" in the wall, which was built by the South in the 1970s, as a "first step towards its full demolition". But, he warned, the process could be expected to be long and difficult.

North Korea has been pressing for the wall's demolition for years but after realising the process would be slow, had opted to start by opening up some gaps. A similar process foreshadowed the demolition of the Berlin Wall in 1989; but then, it was East Germany which began demolishing its own barrier.

The ambassador said the issue now depended on a political decision from South Korea which, though immersed in an economic crisis, is certain to fear a flood of refugees southwards. Floods, drought, tidal waves and a poor harvest have produced a famine of such proportions in North Korea that last month the World Food Programme launched a \$378m (£236m) appeal for food.

Caught in a vacuum caused by the collapse of the Soviet Union, other parts of the North's infrastructure are in disarray. The Red Cross has said that health services there are close to collapse.

— Phil Reeves, Moscow

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Mandela in middle as SA tackles rugby old guard

Nelson Mandela delighted white South Africans when he donned a Springbok shirt. But now he is embroiled in a row over racism in rugby which may end with his appearance in court. Mary Braid in Cape Town reports.

Three years ago President Mandela thrilled white South Africa by appearing in a Springbok rugby shirt. Embracing the old regime's national game - rugby is a quasi-religious institution for Afrikaners - was an inspired gesture in the campaign to achieve racial reconciliation.

Those were the early days of naive hope and great expectations when, with hindsight, gestures were mistaken for substance. That the road to reconciliation is proving long and hard was confirmed this week by the fact that President Mandela has been subpoenaed to give evidence in a court battle between the government and rugby's old guard.

At the centre of the dispute is the management of a game in which, four years after the arrival of black majority rule, players, organisers and fans remain almost exclusively white.

Cricket, the other great white South African sport, has taken itself to the townships to pull in blacks. When it comes to racial transformation, rugby is miles behind, dogged by accusations of racism. The cause was not helped when Andre Markgraaff, the national coach, was sacked last year for calling black rugby officials "kaffirs".

Mr Mandela says he is quite happy to testify. But many will see his summons as proof of the

arrogance and obstinacy of Louis Luyt, the South African Rugby Football Union (Sarf) president. For years he has dominated the game, and his grip on the sport, despite the efforts of a handful of officials, remains absolute.

Mr Luyt, who made his fortune in fertiliser, recently quashed an internal Sarf revolt against him. He also humiliated the leader of the rebellion, a Coloured (mixed-race) rugby official called Brian van Rooyen. Mr van Rooyen then took his allegations of racism and financial mismanagement - including involvement of Mr Luyt's relatives in the commercial side of the game - to the government, already frustrated by the state of rugby, and by Mr Luyt.

Mr Luyt ignored all government appeals for the rugby union to co-operate with an investigation and instructed provincial unions not to comply with requests for information. Now he is in court challenging the government's right to appoint a commission to investigate. The case got off to a suitably bitter start when Mr Luyt accused Steve Tshwete, the sports minister, of conducting a personal vendetta against him. He also said Mr Mandela had allowed himself to be used when he rubber-stamped the formation of the commission.

Mr Luyt's lawyers argued that since Sarf received no money from the state, the way it conducted its business was a private matter. The government's lawyers disagreed. They insisted rugby was a crucial factor in rebuilding South Africa, and that if Sarf was seen as a private concern, the government would have to review its use of the national flag and use of the Springbok name.



Happier days: Mr Mandela with captain Francois Pienaar after the Springboks won the World Cup in an epic encounter with the All Blacks. Now the national game is mired in controversy

Yesterday Joel Netshitenzhe, the President's spokesman, said there might still be an appeal against the "somewhat extraordinary" decision to subpoena Mr Mandela to appear in court next month. There are concerns that a precedent could be set which would restrict the President's constitutional powers. Anyone would be able

to challenge his decisions and he would spend all his time in court. Outside the courtroom the battle goes on.

A few days ago Mluleki George, the National Sports Council president, called for an international boycott of rugby if Sarf did not come up with more racially representative teams.

The national team now boasts one Coloured member. "This is not a threat," he said. "But a warning about how serious the situation in rugby has become. If we [the NSC] do not see a change this season we will be forced to take drastic steps and that means calling for a stop to any international rugby teams coming to play in South

Africa. It is an extreme measure but we and the underprivileged communities cannot wait for ever for change." The irony of an apartheid-era device being resurrected in the new South Africa was not lost. Hostilities look certain to heighten unless Mr Luyt undergoes a sudden and entirely uncharacteristic change of heart.

Gentle touch fails to impress President's foes

Women and disabled people made up the guard of honour for Nelson Mandela when he opened Parliament yesterday. Mary Braid in Cape Town says they could not shield him from harsh criticism over rising crime and other failings.

It may have been the most politically correct opening of parliament in the world. When Mr Mandela walked down the red carpet to open the second democratic elections, he was flanked by 60 disabled children and wheelchair-bound adults.

Although the military men lined up for his ascent of the stairs into parliament's Great Hall, the guard of honour for the first time was entirely female. After the political fireworks of six weeks ago at the ANC party conference in Mafikeng, it was a surprisingly soft occasion. At the Mafikeng conference he appeared to serve notice on the privilege of the white minority, in an attack on what he said was their lack of commitment to racial reconciliation.

Yesterday the President, who has handed his party and day-to-day running of government to his deputy, Thabo Mbeki, dropped the language of accusation for a more moderate appeal to conscience. All South Africans, and especially whites, should perform voluntary community service, to give back to society what they had gained. He called for "moral regeneration" and a "new patriotism" to fight crime and unemployment. "This is our call to all South Africans, to

firm up the moral fibre of our nation ... not because the government says so, but because it is the right thing to do."

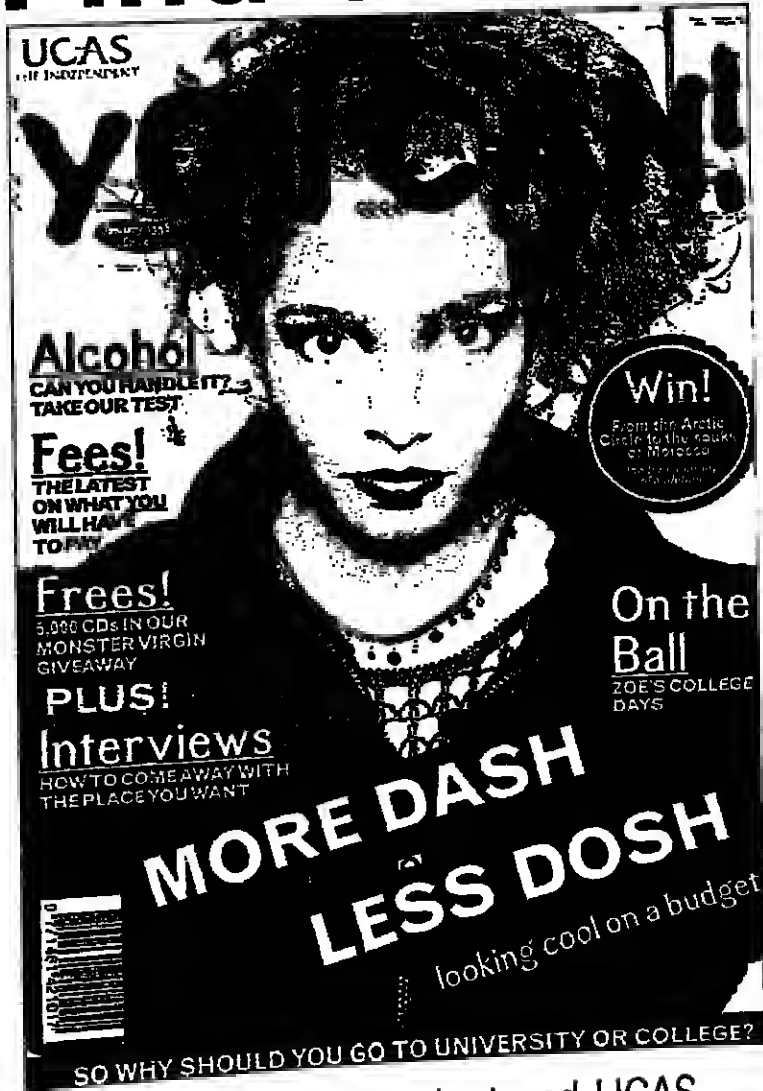
Although he defended the government's record in delivering basic services to the poor, he admitted for the first time that the government would not meet its election promise to build 1 million houses in five years. It was a significant admission, given that elections are only a year away. Financial analysts were happy with his continued commitment to fiscal targets and with his promise that the numbers working in the public sector would be cut.

But the announcement will have dismayed many in a country where unemployment among blacks is rampant. Mr Mbeki's design to encourage companies to employ more blacks. Political analyst Steven Friedman said he was surprised the President had chosen to broach the subject of cutting an estimated 1.2 million public-sector jobs ahead of next year's elections. "It is a daunting task for them in a pre-election year," he said.

President Mandela declined to sugar the pill for ordinary voters. But he did not how to business leaders who criticise the new employment bill. The government would not be deterred by the "sirens of self-interest" being sounded in defence of private jobs. Mr Mbeki said that equated women, blacks and the disabled with low standards. Opposition parties condemned the speech as lacklustre. They were particularly scathing of the President's insistence that the country's crime problem was being exaggerated and that most crimes had decreased since his government came into power.

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THE WEEK ON RADIO

ROBERT HANKS

There is a lot of noise in the world. Even in a quiet room on a winter's day, a quick census of extraneous noise produces the following: car motors, occasional distant honks, plane overhead, wind swishing through trees, light-toned hum of computer (with clacking of keyboard and mouse optional), creaking chair, whispers of air pushing up partially blocked nostrils, and faint, discontented growls reaching up from my abdomen.

With all this rowdiness going on, it seems odd that radio should be based on silence. That probably needs re-phrasing: radio is based on an assumption of silence – if a noise occurs, it will have some purpose or meaning. In effect, this means two sorts of noise are permissible, speech and music; everything else, all that background clutter, is rigorously excluded. Trying to get ordinary, uncensored noise on to the radio is like trying to get past a nightclub bouncer in torn jeans and muddy DMs.

Just how much that noise means to us was glimpsed in a short, sharp feature on Radio 3 last night. In *The Acoustics of Everyday Life*, Derek Sugden, an acoustic engineer whose credits include Glyndebourne and Snape Maltings, talked about the sound peculiar to a number of sites: a glassed-in shopping arcade, a London street, a Hawksmoor church, a tube station, a concert hall, a wood, the seashore. His point was that uncorrupted silence, like absolute zero, never happens – noise, like water, leaks in through the tiniest cracks. The silence behind what we hear on the radio is thoroughly artificial.

Most of the time, that's all to the good – you don't want to hear Sue MacGregor, say, rustling crisp packets over the eight o'clock news. Where it is most annoying, though, is in drama. Take the new serialisation of PD James's *Devices and Desires* (R4, Thursday). Admittedly Dalgleish, the poet-detective, is an improbable Plod, and infects the whole affair with a plodding improbability. But James's stiffness is exacerbated by the wooden unreality of the radio world – a dinner party where nobody scrapes chairs, clinks glasses, sturps coffee; a whistling serial killer who's pitch-perfect and studio-recorded. That headless corpse in the library? It's the listener's sense of involvement.

At last, a new symphony with tunes you can hum

"The symphony – all bits and pieces... No one would understand... no one... no one... Don't let anyone tinker with it..." And, for over 60 years, no one did.

But now Elgar's deathbed wishes have been disobeyed, the sketches for his final symphony have been completed and the result, says Stephen Johnson, is a work that signals a new direction for classical music.

We had just reached the end of the private premiere of "Elgar's Third Symphony". Audience and orchestra had at last stopped applauding. A young composer (who may prefer to remain nameless) bent towards my ear and muttered: "All right, how many first performances have you come out of recently humming the tunes?" Of course it's a trite question, and composer X's carefully ironic tone didn't make it any less so. We've moved on from themes and development these days, haven't we? Composers of all persuasions are trying to find new ways of cultivating the lyrical impulse. But four months after X cautiously posed his question, I am still finding it hard to think of a single new piece from the past 10 years that has made me feel like opening my throat and singing – except, strikingly, this symphony.

Well, if nothing else, the first performance of the sketches for Elgar's Third Symphony, as elaborated by Anthony Payne, gave one old piece of received wisdom the thorough drubbing it deserved. For years we have been told that the surviving material for Elgar's last symphony is a sad testimony to the old composer's declining powers; not only is the original material pretty feeble, we've been informed, but there's actually very little of it. The rest is old ideas recycled, or skeletal scraps of ideas, undecipherable to anyone but the composer himself. The whole thing, it's said, has the look of a doomed project. After all, it was 20 years since Elgar had last written a symphony and almost as long since he had written anything substantial at all. By the end, surely even Elgar must have realised that he was stalling for time.

Wrong. Gloriously wrong. You don't have to look any further than the opening bars of the Third Symphony – brazen octaves and fifths, grinding in contrary motion – to realise that something special is happening here. Granted, the basic idea may derive from a sketch for the unfinished oratorio *The Last Judgement*, but then Elgar often refreshed himself creatively by reaching into his bottom drawer. And anyway the whole motif is transformed: an odd, distinctly un-Elgarian-looking figure becomes a theme

that fairly erupts with potential energy, capable of setting a huge, sweeping musical paragraph in motion. A little later, after Elgar's own beautifully engineered transition (is the equivalent passage in the Second Symphony quite as effective?), comes the "Second Subject": tender, lilting, in Elgar's best "feminine" vein – and completely original this time. Apparently this is another Elgarian love theme, inspired by a young admirer, the violinist Vera Hockman (the initials "VH" stand next to the theme in one sketch). This long melody still haunts my memory – partly, I admit, because I had to play the sketch at the piano during the pre-concert talk I hosted with Anthony Payne; but also because it's so extraordinarily lovely. Feeble? Now, just remember, count to 10...

It would be easy to go on listing glorious tunes, striking motifs or developments which Anthony Payne has derived from those evidently far from undecipherable sketches. All four movements seem crammed with bursting with memorable music. But there's a nagging question. Well, it doesn't exactly "nag" me, but I admit it's hard to answer.

Whose symphony is this? To give a reasonably straightforward answer, some of it is pure Elgar, some of it is Elgar orchestrated or fleshed out, some of it is Elgar "guessed" – or, more charitably, inferred – and some of it is pure Anthony Payne.

It would be wrong to call the Symphony "Elgar", and not just for moral reasons: there are passages where some of the pleasure derives from how like Elgar a development or a piece of orchestral colour is. But, confusingly, I feel that sensation just as strongly in the development theme of the first movement (which Payne has merely orchestrated) as in the coda of the finale (which he has completely composed). And, even knowing more or less bar-by-bar who did what, I honestly can't say that I experience the Symphony as the product of two minds, however well married. Putting that question to conductor Andrew Davis, who directed that memorable first run-through, I found his impression was exactly the same. This is very much "a work", even if you can't always say exactly whose work it is.

So is there an answer? For me, the clue comes in Payne's ending of the finale: a massive crescendo and *diminuendo* based on the finale's main theme – an idea that came to Payne quite spontaneously (during a sleepless night in an American hotel), but which he soon realised was roughly analogous to that vividly pictorial movement "The Wagon Passes" from *The Nursery Suite*. In the Symphony, as the music dies away, there's a flickering reference to the first movement's opening theme, then the final sound is a quiet stroke from gong and low harp, reverberating into nothing. Not everybody likes that final touch. "More like Mahler than Elgar" was one comment. For me, it's like Tony Payne's signature – the aural equivalent of the *Laus Deo* ("Praise be to God") that Haydn used to write at the end of his scores. It's certainly in keeping

with Payne's vision of what the piece is about – and without that vision, of course, there would be no "Third Symphony", only those much-misunderstood sketches.

"Vision" is truly the word. So much so that it makes me wonder if Payne isn't being a little over-modest in calling the Symphony simply an "elaboration" of Elgar's sketches. It is quite different from what, say, Deryck Cooke did with the sketch score of Mahler's 10th Symphony, or from Professor Brian Newbould's painstaking filling-out of the fragments of Schubert's numerous unfinished symphonies.

Payne is, after all, a composer – a composer saturated in 20th-century English

romantic music. As his 1985 Proms commission *The Spirit's Harvest* showed, the works of Elgar, Vaughan Williams, George Butterworth and their contemporaries were among the sounds that first inspired him to compose. His earliest efforts were, he says, "pure English romantic". It is as a composer – not merely a musical detective – that he has "elaborated" the sketches for Elgar's Third Symphony. This is a genuinely creative exercise, full of that "nature's fire" demanded by Robbie Burns; it couldn't be less like pastiche.

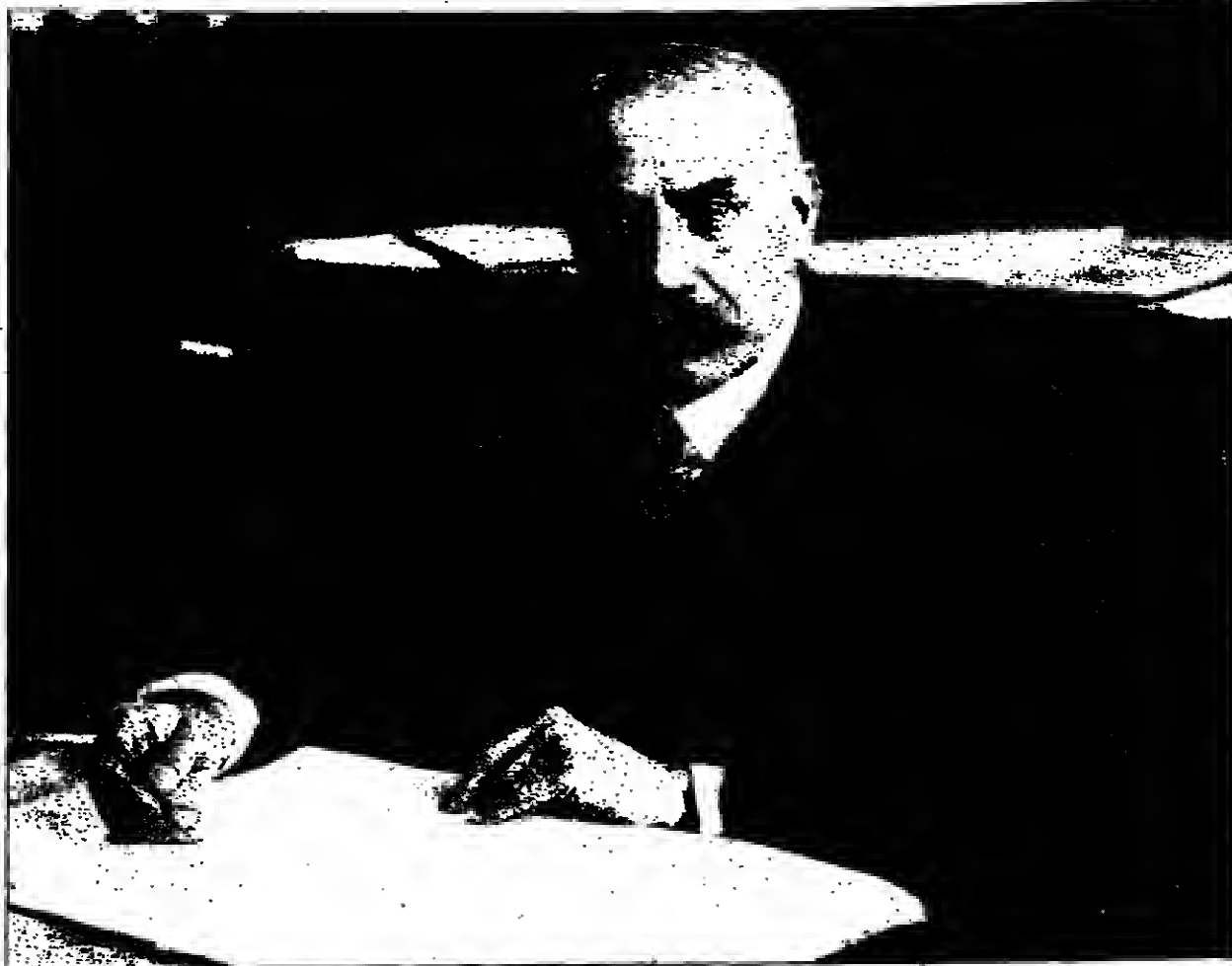
In the interview we conducted before that first, private performance last October, Payne described his mounting excitement as he realised that Elgar's material had a life of its own – that it was fully capable of suggesting its own developments. It was possible to take the ideas and transplant them, like seedlings, and watch them grow. That the process was as organic as that metaphor suggests, I believe, reflected in the "work", the Elgar/Payne Symphony.

So, if this is a genuinely creative musical work, how does it fit into Anthony Payne's already extensive output? In my more fanciful moments, I have caught myself wondering if this wasn't what Payne was put on earth to do. But let's not write his epitaph just yet. As he said in that pre-concert talk, the experience of putting the Third Symphony together has made him think hard about the way he, and others, compose today. Perhaps we spend so much time and energy devising structures, processes, because we are incapable of creating basic material with the "life of its own" that Payne found among Elgar's sketches. If, in helping to create Elgar's Third Symphony, Anthony Payne has found the beginnings of a way back to classical Western thematic composition, it will be fascinating to see what he turns up. Until then, there's always this stirring – and eminently hummable – Symphony.

THE ELGAR PREMIERE
The first public performance of the Elgar/Payne Symphony No 3 will be given by the BBC SO, under Andrew Davis, on Sun 15 Feb at 7.30pm in the RFI, SBC, London SE1 (tel 0171 960 4242). It will also be broadcast on BBC Radio 3 at 7.30pm on Mon 16 Feb.

A recording of the first private performance, preceded by a conversation between Anthony Payne, Andrew Davis and Stephen Johnson, will be broadcast on Radio 3 at 9.35pm on Tue 17 Feb.

The premiere recording of the work, together with a documentary disc featuring a commentary by Anthony Payne and performances of the original sketches, will be released by NMC Recordings (distributed by the Complete Record Co) on 15 Feb (NMC D053 and NMC D052 respectively).



Sir Edward Elgar (left, in 1919); a page of sketches for his uncompleted symphony; and Anthony Payne, the composer who has finally allowed us all to hear Elgar's Third Symphony. Photographs: Hulton Getty/Jim Four



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Who says philanthropy isn't an f-word?

A WEEK IN THE ARTS
DAVID LISTER

Clothing industry millionaire Peter Wolff is giving £1m to help young playwrights. It is one of the most generous pieces of philanthropy in the arts for some time. But the gift from the 67-year-old self-made man, who once worked in the lingerie department at Marks & Spencer, comes with a notable caveat. Mr Wolff does not want swearing or gratuitous sex and violence in the dramas he funds. He wants to help aspiring playwrights produce "middle of the road" drama, saying: "I want to find and help a group of playwrights to write good theatre without needing to put 20 f-words in it. So many people I know are becoming reluctant to go to the theatre because there is so much filth and violence."

Now there's a hell of a challenge, if Mr Wolff will pardon my language. Do we have a single young writer, or indeed a playwright of any age, who can craft a play without any swearing, sex or violence? Mr Wolff's offer conjures up for me a delightful vision of writers all over the country tearing up pages of drafts in exasperation as they struggle in vain to master the long-forgotten skill of the f-less play, five-pound notes vanishing before their eyes.

"I tried," a despairing Mark Ravenhill might plead with Mr Wolff, tears rolling down his cheeks, "believe me, I tried. But *Shopping and Sewing* just didn't work."

Looking down the list of West End plays now on, I could find few that accord with Mr Wolff's wishes. *Peter Pan* certainly, but even there Captain Hook has a violent kink and Wendy's continual pleas for a kiss strike me as suspiciously gratuitous.

Not that Mr Wolff doesn't have a point. There is rather a lot of gratuitous swearing on stage. I recall that even Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Sunset Boulevard* had an f-word in the open-

ing moments and not another all night. It was incongruous, but he was far from alone in adding an incongruous swear word for no particular reason, rather in the way that Hollywood filmmakers do (the real reason there being to gain a street-cred-worthy Certificate 15).

Yes, aesthetically, Mr Wolff might have a point. But he is wrong to put his money where his mouth is. Over the past decade of arts sponsorship, there have been constant cries of wolf (no pun intended) that a sponsor might try to influence the content of an artistic endeavour. It never really happened. Now it has, though this aspect has gone largely unnoticed in the publicity surrounding the generosity of Mr Wolff's gift.

Constraints on writers do not produce good work. They produce a formulaic hack-job, "middle of the road" plays made to order (bring them back if they do not fit). Yes, occasionally there is unwarranted swearing, sex and violence (though, on the West End stage, it's largely the first and very, very rarely the other two). But these are explorations in art for both writers and audiences. Where the language is relevant, it works; where it is not, audiences sooner or later stop coming, writers mature and develop their style.

I am sometimes worried that we are in danger of losing what Harold Pinter once called "an underground vocabulary" if we have too much swearing. There is nothing to fall back on in genuine moments of verbal aggression. But let audience response determine what the public find relevant to their lives in drama, not the dictat of philanthropists. Mr Wolff is a generous man, and theatre should be grateful for his gift, but no strings, please.

Incidentally, it is striking that Mr Wolff cites as his own favourite playwrights David Hare, Tom Stoppard, Arthur Miller and David Mamet. David Mamet? Take away the swearing and sexual discussions in Mamet and you shorten the evening considerably. If Mamet had had a patron who had insisted that the young writer avoid those alleged sins, a great writer might have been stifled.



Haroun Tazieff

Haroun Tazieff, volcanologist, born Warsaw 11 May 1914; Assistant Professor of Geology, University of Brussels 1950-52; Head of Research, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, France 1957-70; Director 1971-81; Secretary of State in the Prime Minister's Office for Prevention of Natural Disasters 1974-86; Mayor of Mirmande 1977-89; married 1952 Pauline de Ways-Ruatt d'Elzies (deceased), 1958; France Depierre; died Paris 2 February 1998.



Tazieff: nothing by halves

Tell any French citizen that you work on active volcanoes for a living, and their inevitable first question will be, "Do you know Haroun Tazieff?" Such was the visibility and charisma of Tazieff that everyone in the country knew who he was and what he did for a living. This might be expected for a politician or a celebrated actor, but for a scientist in a small - if rather glamorous - branch of the

earth sciences, it was quite extraordinary. Tazieff reached this almost godlike status by taking one of nature's most spectacular and terrifying phenomena and transporting it into the lives of every French man, woman, and child - both through his books and, more importantly, through his breathtaking films of volcanoes in action.

Born in Poland in 1914, Tazieff spent his formative years - following the death of his father - with his mother in St Petersburg, and later in Belgium, where he studied geology and agriculture. Always fascinated by the Earth and everything associated with it, Tazieff worked as a geologist, first amongst the snowy peaks of the French Alps, and later - in the 1940s -

in the steamy jungles of the Belgian Congo. It was here at last that he discovered volcanoes, and in them a natural phenomenon worth his attention. It would be untrue to say that Tazieff fell in love with volcanoes: rather he regarded them as the enemy. As a keen boxer and rugby player, Tazieff viewed volcanoes as he would an opposing fighter or team - as something to be overcome at all odds. Some fellow volcanologists, and especially those with a more sober and scientific bent, frowned upon this attitude, but it found favour and admiration in the hearts of his French compatriots who followed his struggles against molten rock across the planet and viewed his ordeals somewhat in the light of France against nature.

For the first time, his documentary films gave the viewer a real impression of the terrifying power of volcanic eruptions and the destruction they are capable of wreaking. The human interest in the films was inevitably provided by Tazieff himself as - apparently oblivious to any danger and for no obvious reason - he placed himself, time and time again, in incredibly dangerous positions on the rims of exploding craters, in the paths of lava flows, and in boats on the surfaces of acid crater lakes.

Tazieff never did anything by halves and always had one eye on the camera throughout his long and active career. When a new crater opened up at the summit of Mount Etna (Sicily) in 1968, the UK sent a single re-

searcher to sample the escaping gases; Tazieff on the other hand led a major expedition, complete with sherpas and shiny reflective silver suits. Needless to say film of the team in action was shortly to be seen all over France encouraging another generation's interest in volcanoes and their activity.

However popular he was with his countrymen as a whole, it would be wrong to imagine that Tazieff did not create ripples, or even rather large waves, wherever he went. During the 1976 volcanic crisis on the French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe, he argued violently with another great French earth scientist, Claude Allègre - correctly, as it turned out - against the needless evacuation

of 75,000 people from the vicinity of the volcano.

In 1980, just before the biggest eruption in North America since 1912, he assured US citizens that Mount St Helens would not erupt any further. Following a submarine landslide off the south coast of France, Tazieff announced that the town of Nice could disappear into the sea at any moment, a prediction that led an irate mayor to describe Tazieff as "a photographer who specialises in volcanoes" - a serious putdown for a man who regarded himself very much as a scientist first and foremost.

In his later years, Tazieff entered the political scene, becoming Secretary of State for the Prevention of Natural and Technological Disasters in 1984.

He lacked, however, the guile and subtlety of a natural politician, and preferred the freedom that allowed him to speak his mind on all and every issue. According to Tazieff, global warming was an "outright invention" and the ozone holes had been around since the 1920s and had nothing to do with CFCs.

Perhaps the most surprising of Tazieff's remarks were reserved for his scientist compatriot Jacques Cousteau, whose stance against nuclear testing at sea he described as "imbecilic". Surprising, because - in the eyes of the French and many other avid followers of his films across the world - Haroun Tazieff was the Jacques Cousteau of volcanoes.

- Bill McGuire

Marian Kratochwil

Marian Kratochwil, artist, born Kosow, Poland 30 September 1906; married 1961 Kathleen Browne; died London 3 December 1997.

Marian Kratochwil was one of those artists of distinction, many but not all of foreign birth, for whom the English art establishment has had shamefully little time.

Like other Polish artists of his generation he made his escape in dangerous circumstances from occupied Europe and rejoined the Polish army in Scotland in 1940. After the Second World War his background and beliefs ruled out a return to his native country, and he arrived in London in 1947, more or less penniless.

There was nothing in that background to prepare him for the radical changes in art which marked the post-war period, or indeed those which had been brewing in Paris since the year of his birth, 1906. His classical education in philosophy, coupled with one-to-one study with an experienced painter and a self-determination to learn the methods of the old masters, resulted in distancing him equally from modernism and from the feeble productions that passed for academic painting in this country. It was not a comfortable situation to be in, but, for Kratochwil, comfort was never the first consideration.

Two women helped to rescue Kratochwil from the grimness of a penurious life in post-war London. One of them, the fine New Zealand painter Kathleen Browne, eventually became his wife. Together they ran a small art school in Chelsea until their retirement in 1979, when they moved to Hampstead. The other was also a painter, now not well enough remembered, Dame Ethel Walker, who recognised his talent and unusual mind.

When Kratochwil came to London she was already in her eighties and too old to help his career in the way she wished. When she died in 1951 she be-



A painstaking observer of rural life: drawing by Kratochwil of Polish peasants dancing, 1933

queathed him a large number of paintings, believing that by selling them he could buy time to paint. Kratochwil felt a strong sense of responsibility towards this legacy, but fashion had passed Ethel Walker by, and her paintings did not spare him from the need to teach. It was many years before he could place the most important of them. Some of the finest he gave to the Courtauld Institute in 1973.

Kratochwil began his career as a painstaking observer of the vanishing rural life of eastern Poland, and his drawings of it are of great historical as well as aesthetic interest. He continued this fine graphic tradition with sketches of Scottish weather done in spare moments while in the Polish army, then with scenes of London life in the East End, and after 1956 in Spain.

Often his attention would focus on the ironies and humiliations of the human condition. From 1932 onwards he devel-

oped his oils technique, to the point where he could justly represent the Spanish landscape, say, with the ferocious concentration on its rocky structure that David Bomberg evinced in his landscapes of the Ronda district, or again with the celestial vision of El Greco at Toledo, a city he represented in paintings that do no violence to the memory of his great predecessor.

Marian Kratochwil's love affair with Spain, and with Toledo in particular, was fully reciprocated, and it is in the Museo de Santa Cruz in that city that the best collection of his work is now to be found. Spain, with its respect for continuity was prepared to give the foreigner wall space which neither Poland nor Britain allowed him.

In his last 10 years Kratochwil was engaged on a series of allegorical subjects, perhaps taking their departure from his many paintings of Don Quixote. They culminate in a large and

complex painting which seems to represent the worldly powers contemplating their apocalyptic, surely one of the most curious and unusual canvases to be painted in recent years, which was still on his easel a year ago, but is now on permanent display in Granada.

Even in old age, Marian Kratochwil was a commanding figure of impressive size, a fervent talker and prodigious cor-



Kratochwil: commanding

respondent. He was wholly unaffected by ideas of political correctness, or by a sense of modernist evolution in art. His discourse drew on his education and extensive reading, not without nostalgia, but fixed always on two topics that he thought were completely interdependent - humanity and art.

With the help of devoted friends he and Kathleen maintained their Hampstead home in the teeth of old age and infirmity. A few years ago he unexpectedly found himself in a position to do as he had longed to do and publish a study of Kathleen Browne (who survives him), which in its turn throws light on his own character, and is written with understanding and the tender gallantry of a distant age. Conversely, he bitterly regretted not being able to clear away the cloud of oblivion he felt had fallen on his late patroness, Ethel Walker.

- Douglas Hall

Jill Allibone

Jill Spencer Rigden, architectural historian, born Abadan, Persia 26 April 1932; married 1957 David Allibone (three daughters); died Tunbridge Wells, Kent 3 February 1998.

The architectural historian Jill Allibone was the biographer of the Victorian architects Anthony Salvin and George Devey and an active and campaigning vice-chairman of the Victorian Society in the 1980s.

She was born Jill Rigden in 1932 in Abadan, Persia, where her father, Horace Walter Rigden, managed the Anglo-Persian oil refinery. Much of her childhood was spent in Persia (now Iran), where her father remained in charge throughout the Second World War, though she was evacuated to South Africa. With this international background, it is interesting that when she returned to live in her father's county, Kent, she developed all the passion of a native for that part of England. After Godolphin School, Salisbury, she went to St Martin's School of Art, and in 1954 to the Courtauld, where she specialised in Gothic art history. A contemporary remembers her as intellectually tough, benefiting from the intensive tutorial system then in place, which was so daunting that of the dozen students who started the year only six finished.

Despite getting married in her last year and doing her Finals already pregnant, she got a sufficiently good degree to enable her to return after the birth of three daughters to do a PhD. She and her solicitor husband, David Allibone, bought a 1920 Arts and Crafts house with a large garden in Kent, which became the centre of a very happy family life.

For her thesis, she chose Anthony Salvin, one of the most important of the early Goths, who worked for a large number of royal and aristocratic patrons, restoring medieval castles in a witty and scholarly manner. She was fortunate in having as

her supervisor Sir Nikolaus Pevsner, one of the pioneering writers who in the 1950s awoke the British to their valuable and fast-disappearing legacy of Victorian buildings, and who was the first chairman of the Victorian Society, founded in 1958.

The work on Salvin and Pevsner's advocacy together enlisted Allibone's support for the society, which campaigns to save threatened buildings of the 19th and early 20th centuries, and for the next 30 years her enthusiasm and businesslike approach were to be of enormous benefit. She was a hard-working committee member, never afraid to fight for a cause or a building in which she believed. Moreover, as a former secretary of the society said, while there were always plenty of members who would point out what needed doing, Jill Allibone would do something herself to help.

Her doctoral thesis was published in 1987, as *Anthony Salvin, Pioneer of Gothic Revival Architecture, 1799-1881*, an exhaustive study of a very successful practitioner, responsible amongst other things for Harlaxton Manor in Lincolnshire (1831-38), and the restoration in 1854-65 of Alnwick Castle for the Duke of Northumberland.

In 1990, she combined two of her enthusiasms, in *George Devey, Architect 1820-1886*, an account of an architect who adapted the traditional Kentish Wealden style for his buildings, thus creating an authentic vernacular style. A number of these were in Kent, including Betteshanger Manor (1856-82), and additions to Walmer Castle (1871-72), but his extensive practice also included Ascott House in Buckinghamshire (1870-84) for Leopold de Rothschild and Killarney House in Kerry for Lord Kenmare (1877-79). She catalogued the Devey drawings for the British Architectural Library, and wrote the catalogue. Her interest in both architecture and the law came together in the essays she contributed to *The Inns of Court* (1996), to accompany photographs by Hélène Binet.



Allibone: independent

Despite her roles as architectural historian and devoted mother and grandmother, for over 20 years Jill Allibone was a member of the South Westminster Bench. A fellow JP remembers her as a "fiercely independent colleague with a somewhat forbidding manner", but whose procedure was always correct, and her dealings with those in the dock both tough and fair. Behind this sometimes uncompromising exterior was a woman of many interests and enthusiasms, which she would always share with colleagues, whether on the Bench or as architectural historians, devoted to her family, her dogs, and an equally formidable parrot.

To her work she added two other enthusiasms, for the countryside and buildings of Kent, where she was a member of the Kent Buildings Preservation Trust, and recently for an endangered building type - the mausoleum. On a visit to a family grave in Whitstable, Kent, she was struck by the condition of a magnificent tomb, designed by Charles Barry junior in 1875, for Wynn Ellis, a major benefactor to the National Gallery. This led her to look seriously at the plight of these architecturally significant monuments, often erected by families which had since disappeared. With other architectural historians she set up a charitable Mausolea and Monuments Trust, finally constituted in 1997, which now owns and preserves some six of these monuments.

- Hermione Hobhouse

BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS

DEATHS

BELL: To Noelen (née Burns) and Andrew, a daughter, Anna Victoria, on Wednesday 4 February 1998, a sister for Elizabeth, Joseph and Theresa.

Lectures

TODAY National Gallery: Jacqueline Aulst, "Hearts and Flowers (1)" Homburg, Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia", 12pm.
Victoria and Albert Museum Emma Taylor, "Forty Years of Paris Couture 1925 to 1965", 2.30pm.

TOMORROW National Portrait Gallery: John Cooper, "Two Portraits by Kneller: Marlborough and Lord Oxford", 3pm.
Changing of the Guard **TODAY** The Household Cavalry Mount of Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am. **TOMORROW** The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment mounts the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am; F Company Scots Guards mounts the Queen's Guard at Buckingham Palace, 11.30am, band provided by the Coldstream Guards.

Birthdays

TODAY Mrs Gillian Banks, policy consultant, Age Concern, England, 65; Lord Belwin, former government minister, 75; Mr Eddie Bracken, film actor, 78; Mr David Bright, ambassador to Spain, 59; Miss Dora Bryan, actress, 74; The Earl of Cork and Orrery, writer, artist and broadcaster, 88; Mr Gerald Davies, rugby footballer, 53; The Earl of Harewood, former operating managing director, 75; Mr Gareth Hunt, actor, 55; Mr Ian Jack, Editor, *Granada*, 53; The Hon Peter Jay, writer and broadcaster, 61; Lord Keith of Kinkel, former Lord of Appeal in Ordinary, 76; Sir John Leahy, former High Commissioner in Australia, 70; Dr Barbara McGibbon, pathologist, 70; Sir George Moseley, former senior civil servant, 73; Sir Geoffrey Mulcahy, chairman, Kingfisher, 56; Sir Philip Myers, former HM Inspector of Constabulary, 67; Mr Roy Watson, former Director-General, National Farmers' Union, 72.

TOMORROW Professor Averil Cameron, Warden, Kable College, Oxford, 58; Miss Rachel Cusk, author, 31; Professor David Daube, Emeritus Regius Professor of Civil Law, Oxford University, 89; Mr Osian Ellis, harpist, 70; Marshal of the RAF Sir John Grandy, 85; Admiral of the Fleet Lord Hill-Norton, 83; Lady Howe of Aberystwyth, Chairman, Broadcasting Standards Commission, 66; Lord Jakobovits, former Chief Rabbi, 76; Ms Jenny Jones MR 52; Professor Ann Lambton, Persian scholar, 80; Mr Murray Lawrence, former chairman of Lloyd's, 63; Sir Jack Lemmon, film actor, 73; Sir Francis McWilliams, former Lord Mayor of London, 72; Sir Kenneth Maddocks, former overseas administrator, 91; Mr John F. Martin, High Commissioner to Malawi, 55; Mr Alexander Papanikolaou, in-

ternational financier, 68; Dr June Paterson-Brown, former Chief Commissioner, Gilt Finance, 66; Lord Payne, chairman, London Merchant Securities, 80; Sir Richard Southern, former President, St John's College, Oxford, 86; The Rev Dr John Tudor, Development Officer, Harris Manchester College, Oxford, 68; Mr John Williams, composer and conductor, 66.

Anniversaries

TODAY Births: St Thomas More, 1478; Sir James Augustus Henry Murray, editor of the Oxford *English Dictionary*, 1857; Deshaea Ann Rockcliffe (West), novelist, 1823; Adolphe Sax, inventor of the saxophone, 1814. On this day: Edward of Caernarvon (later King Edward VII) was created Prince of Wales, 1301. Today is the Feast Day of St Adanauis, St Luke the Younger, St Mount, St Richard, "King", St Silvin and St Theodore of Heraclea.

TOMORROW Births: John Ruskin, writer, artist and critic, 1819; Jules Verne, novelist, 1828; James Dean (James Byron), actor, 1931; Deshaea Mary, Queen of Scots, beheaded 1537; Robert Michael Ballantine, author of books for boys, 1894. On this day: The Great Frost of London ended, 1740. **TOMORROW** is the Feast Day of St Cathman, St Effleda, St Jerome Emiliani, St John of Matha, St Meinhold, St Nicotus or Nizor of Besançon and St Stephen of Muret.

St Matthew's Church, Cambridge St Matthew's Church, Cambridge, is holding a reunion weekend on 25/26 July 1998. Former members please telephone 01223 363545 or 316916 for details, by 30 April.

FAITH & REASON

Now ghosts are more popular than God

Why is belief in the paranormal rising despite Britain's supposed scientific rationalism? Because, argues Andrew Brown, it offers the illusion of control in a world which seems increasingly wanton.

One of the oddest and least predicted facts about the last 50 years has been the inexorable rise of superstition. At a time when the whole world has been transformed by modern science (and in the places where that transformation is most complete) there is an almost complete rejection of the foundational beliefs of scientific rationality. This has not, as we all know, led to any resurgence in traditional religion or even what you might call traditional miracles. What has grown up instead is a mish-mash of private beliefs, jostling uneasily together like ice floes on a chilly sea of ignorance. A newspaper poll this week suggested that far more people now believe in ghosts, or ESP, than go to church.

Most of the explanations for this phenomenon have come from the disgruntled losers: the scientists and the

religious: both of whom incline to blame credulity of the masses. "When people do not believe in God, they do not believe in anything," they believe in anything," said Chesterton, and this is a remark less profound than it is generally taken to be. As an analysis, it doesn't carry us much further than the socio-biologists' contention that people are born gullible and will believe anything their parents tell them and never think thereafter. How tough-minded socio-biologists have evolved from such a mass of credulity is never properly explained, of course.

I think it is more useful to ask what needs these beliefs are fulfilling. Obviously it is wrong to choose beliefs that are repugnant to truth simply because they make us feel better: but people who reason this far seldom go on to consider that bizarre and irrational beliefs, if they persist, must not only make people feel better, but not clash too violently with the truth, or possibly express truths which seem peripheral to what they are ostensibly about.

To take a simple example: many people believe that the end of the world is imminent, and foretold by prophecy. None the less, we can and should discriminate among these beliefs even when they are expressed in what seem

to be the same words, by asking how they function in the lives of the people who hold them. The same belief can carry the message that the world is ultimately manageable and will turn out for the best, or that it is all hopeless and the best policy is suicide. There is a celebrated study of apocalyptic belief among the technicians who look after American nuclear missiles, which found that believing in the imminent divine plan to manage their anxieties about preparing for it - and so, probably made it less likely to happen, at least by accident. On the other hand, the followers of the Golden Temple Order, who also believe they will be raptured up to heaven in the skies, think it necessary to kill themselves first, and this minor doctrinal point has considerable practical consequences.

One of the important things about the surge of paranormal belief is how few consequences and costs it has. This is not immediately apparent. When people say they believe in astrology or in Tarot predictions, we are tempted to assume that they do so when these contradict other evidence. But of course they don't. There was a survey last autumn in which people were asked whether they believed in astrology -

overwhelmingly they said they did. Would they base decisions on it? Overwhelmingly they would not.

So there is a sort of reasonableness behind this, even if it is the rationality of the emotions, responding to their own needs. But this sudden surge of emotional anarchy is surely on one level a response to the emotional emptiness of modern economic life. Individuals don't matter in a modern economy. That is what makes it so successful and at the same time so unsatisfying.

The paranormal, by contrast, offers a constantly shifting set of perspectives in which individuals matter; and the fluidity is part of its charm. It is like ambient music. As soon as you have gone through reading totes, you are on to homeopathy for cats, or feng shui. None of these relates to each other; none pretends to offer a coherent view of the universe; but all provide the central illusion that what we do makes a difference to the universe. Newspapers should not sneer at this too much, since the most successful ones are exactly those which convince their readers that they and their prejudices matter. Is it more dishonest to do so with horoscopes or news stories?

• "Faith & Reason" is edited by Paul Valley

There is already an entitlement to privacy, and Irvine is right to enforce it



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It is time to come to the defence of Lord Irvine. The Lord Chancellor was pilloried this week for suggesting that journalists should be prevented by law from printing the facts of a cabinet minister's affair. The knee-jerk condemnation heaped upon him almost entirely avoided the important question: was he right? What is more, he was gleefully traduced for having "blundered", "gaffed" and spoken out of turn.

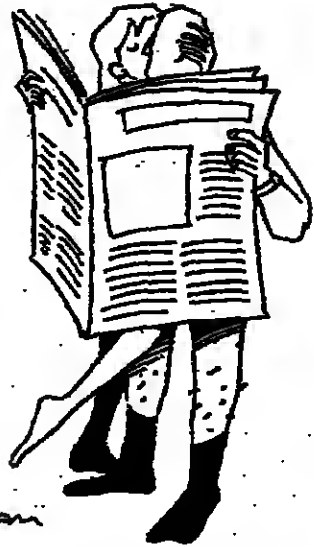
Let us get a few things straight. Derry Irvine's alleged mistake was to have answered a question put to him by a journalist. He was asked how entrenching the right to privacy of the European Convention on Human Rights in British law would have affected the case of Robin Cook and his secretary. It was a serious question and he gave a serious answer. He did not pause to think, "I wonder what the tabloids will make of this?" It is hypocritical, therefore, for those who bemoan politicians' unwillingness to engage in intelligent and open public debate to accuse Lord Irvine of lacking "political judgement".

It was not only journalists who were unfairly critical. Indeed, it was the Prime Minister's official spokesman who turned a small "Irvine gags press" story into a big "Blair slaps down mentor" story. Of

course, as the spokesman repeatedly yesterday, the timing of Lord Irvine's remarks was not helpful. Good. We want more politicians capable of answering questions at times when the spin doctors do not want them asked, even if their answers take them "off message".

Much of the press reaction to the Lord Chancellor's interview was, in any case, based on a misunderstanding. He talked of strengthening the rules on privacy operated by the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), with a power to impose fines of up to £10,000. Far from increasing the scope of the law, this was specifically intended to avert the need for the courts to rule on issues of privacy.

The fact is that we have a privacy law already, called Article 8 of the European Convention. This sets out the right to respect for "private and family life", including one's home and correspondence, which must not be interfered with by "public authorities". Although the convention does not give individuals the power to enforce this right to privacy against the media directly, there is an obligation on regulatory bodies such as the PCC, even if they are not government agencies. And there is a more general obligation on government itself to safeguard the right to privacy.



Lord Irvine is about to make this right more tangible by making it enforceable in British courts, rather than requiring citizens to turn to Strasbourg. That is strongly supported by this newspaper and almost the entire spectrum of liberal opinion. It is odd, therefore, that some liberal

commentators are the most exercised by the alleged imposition of statutory controls on a free press.

The Lord Chancellor may not have been wise to talk so casually of the PCC devising a mechanism of "prior restraint" to stop newspapers before they publish something which is an unjustified invasion of privacy. The phrase is as old and as sacred as the idea of freedom of the press, which, according to Blackstone in 1765, "consists in laying no previous restraints upon publications, and not in freedom from censure for criminal matter when published".

However, as David Aaronovitch pointed out in these pages yesterday, this is not a principle which should be elevated to theology. There is little point in having a right to privacy if you can enforce it only after the damage has been done. But prior restraint is something which should only be considered, as with injunctions for libel, in cases where there is an overwhelming public-interest argument against publication.

This is where Lord Irvine did stray into error. He said that the PCC should have ordered the *News of the World* not to report the Foreign Secretary's affair. Now, it would be right to argue that a newspaper should not have published the story. We

do not think that it is right for photographers to stake out someone's flat in order to obtain proof of marital infidelity. Lord Irvine asked, rhetorically: "What public interest is there in disclosing that?" At the time of publication, there was none. Although, when it emerged that Mr Cook had sacked his diary secretary and thought about appointing Gwyneth Paltrow in her place, a kind of posthumous case could be made.

But there is a larger issue. We may disapprove of what the *News of the World* did, but that is not the same as saying that it should be prevented by law from doing it. In the scale of human rights, that of privacy (Article 8) should be balanced by that of freedom of expression (Article 10). If the case of the Foreign Secretary's Secretary had been tested against the European Convention, free speech would weigh heavier than privacy. Lord Irvine even admitted that the courts would be "unlikely to grant an injunction in favour of any public figure" - in which case, why did he think the PCC should impose prior restraint?

On this point Lord Irvine may have been wrong, but the argument is finely balanced, difficult and important. He should be praised rather than vilified for engaging in it.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Iraqi crisis

Before we work ourselves into a war mindset over the undoubted dangers presented by Iraq, it might be advisable to consider some wider aspects of the situation.

First, both the United Kingdom and the United States are signatories to the 1977 Protocols to the Geneva Conventions. The Protocols expressly forbid the bombardment of installations containing hazardous substances. Second, it would seem unwise to risk sending a cascade of nerve gases or anthrax spores into the environment with massive attacks of high explosive.

Such mass-killing weapons as chemical and biological agents should be got rid of, and Unisom has evidently done much. But it has always been the case, and always will be so, that the consequences of warfare acts are incalculable. Bombing Iraq again would not be clever; there are much better alternatives. FREDERICK STARKEY
Mold, Chwyd

Your leading article ("When it comes to welfare, the special relationship offers a lesson in failure", 6 February) supports military action against Iraq "if it is justified in international law". International law says that no state has the right to alter the domestic political arrangement of other states through overt military means (UN Declaration 1970).

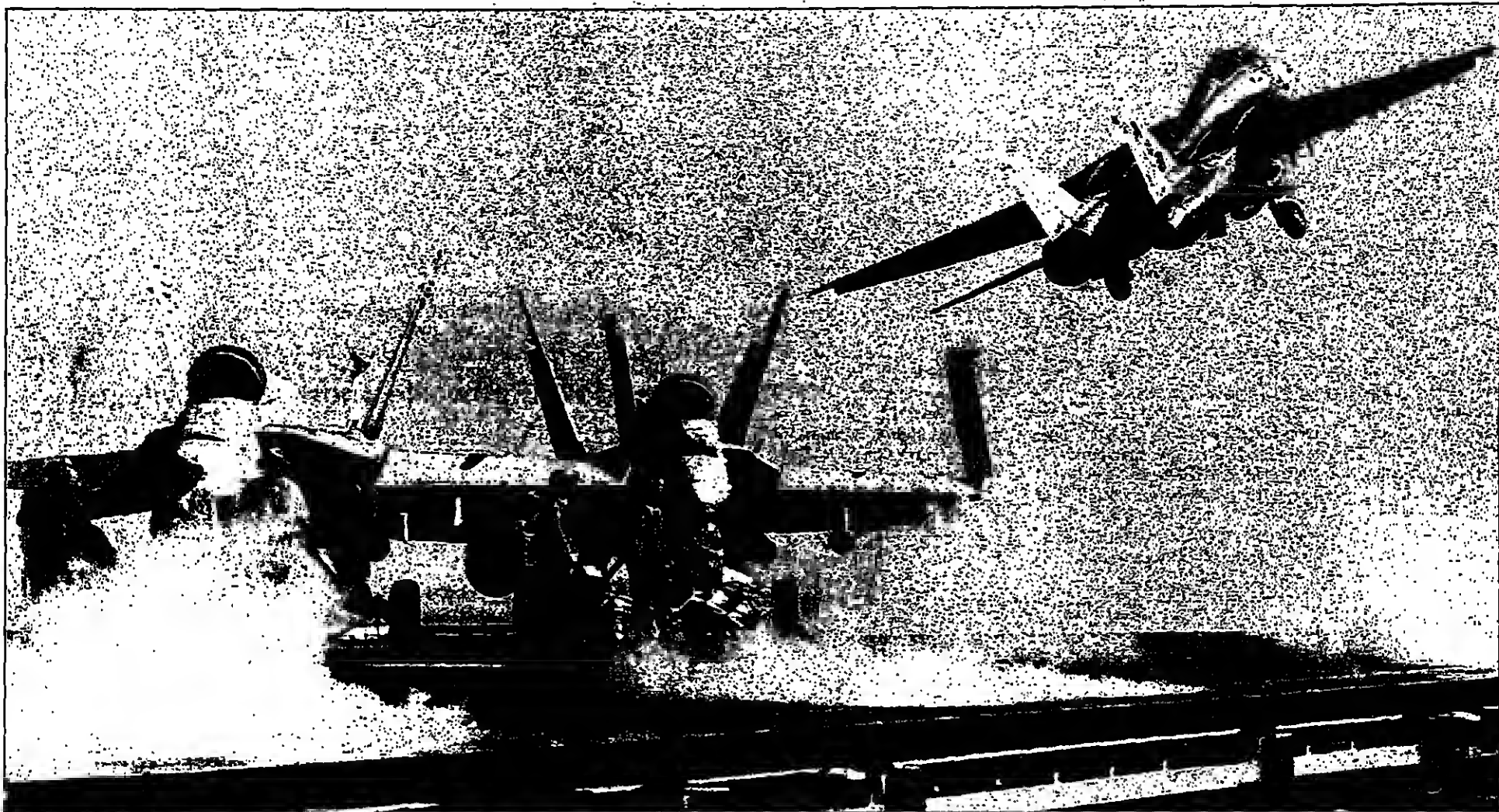
Military action against Iraq would be justifiable if it had the full backing of the UN Security Council. But in the absence of a consensus on the Security Council favouring the use of force, the impending air strikes on Iraq would not only violate international law, but would also add substance to the oft-repeated accusation that the UN is merely an instrument of Anglo-American domination. RANDHIR SINGH BAINS
Gants Hill, Essex

US intentions have been clear for many years: the creation and maintenance of a large and stable market for their products, especially in the lucrative arms sector. They have achieved this by creating imaginary enemies, minor wars and Nato, and by playing around in the domestic affairs of other countries.

In each case, Britain has been disposed to lend a hand and to ask few questions. (Last year, Gore Vidal referred to the United Kingdom as "the Americans' favourite aircraft carrier"). It seems to matter little how brutal the policy; the US maintains its allies in western Europe.

As we appear to be on the eve of another attack on Iraq we must hope that the threat is a real threat, that it will truly make the world a safer place, and that Britain is not just another cog in the machine. ADRIAN K HALL
Madrid

What is emerging from the Iraqi crisis is the general acceptance, at face value, of the American and British governments' allegations about Iraq.



An F-14 jet fighter takes off from the aircraft carrier USS George Washington in the Gulf, as part of Operation Southern Watch

Jim Hollander / Reuters

Prior to the 1991 Gulf War, two reports were circulated which created great hostility towards Iraq, to the extent of making public opinion supportive of waging a ruthless war. The first story was about Iraq amassing troops and tanks on the Kuwait/Saudi border in preparation for an attack on Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter. The second story was about Iraqi soldiers seizing incubators from a Kuwaiti hospital and discarding the babies. A few years later, both stories were proven to be untrue (Channel Four, *The Lies That Made the Gulf War*, January 1996). However, the damage had already been done. R NADHMI
London SW6

US intentions have been clear for many years: the creation and maintenance of a large and stable market for their products, especially in the lucrative arms sector. They have achieved this by creating imaginary enemies, minor wars and Nato, and by playing around in the domestic affairs of other countries.

Risks from fluoride

Dental health is improving in Britain, yet only 10 per cent of people drink fluoridated water, so it is clear that fluoride in water is not necessary ("Fluoride fear condemns children to tooth decay", 5 February).

Mass medication through our public water supply is a very dangerous precedent. Most European countries have banned fluoride in their water supplies due to health and safety fears. There is strong scientific evidence that fluoride causes many health problems - it weakens the immune system, it is linked to increased cancer death rates and osteosarcoma rates in young males, and increased hip fractures rates, it adversely affects genes and chromosomes, reduces insulin production by the pancreas, affects thyroid and kidney functions, increases the infant mortality rate in under-

nourished populations and also causes brittle teeth.

Natural fluoride is different to the "artificial" fluoride put in water - even so, in areas where it occurs naturally to a significant degree, there are health problems. Artificial fluoride is a waste product of the steel and fertiliser industries and requires safe storage and disposal. Even fluoridated toothpaste carries a warning not to swallow. MAUREEN MADDOCK
York

If the parents in your case studies (5 February) have heard about fluoridation of water and take their children for regular dental check-ups, how come they haven't heard of fluoride tablets? This leaves the choice and responsibility of fluoride consumption with the parents which, in my opinion, is where it belongs. ANI HARRIS
High Peak, Derbyshire

Aims of BBC drama

How distressing to see Michael Wearing, the head of BBC drama series, forced to resign over the increased use of American-style focus groups at the BBC (report, 6 February). As one who conducts over 100 such groups a year, for a whole variety of clients, I know their limitations as well as their advantages. Group discussions, as we

call them, are a great way to find out what viewers think and feel in detail and depth; but are not a substitute for artistic judgement. Had group discussions existed in Shakespeare's day, I expect the ending of *Romeo and Juliet* would have been changed.

We all want to see BBC drama that is aimed at both minorities and majorities, which pushes forward the boundaries as well as reflecting current preferences. That is why the BBC must not be afraid of taking artistic risks, but at the same time listening to viewers' opinions. JUDITH WARDLE
London SE5

The first black peer?

Carl Jackson (letter, 5 February) may be right to include Baroness Flather and Lord Chitnis in the category of "black"; but the actual skin colour of most people whose ancestors originated from the Asian sub-continent is brown.

However, if Carl Jackson insists on describing us as black (and some of us love it), then the first Indian to be created a peer was Sir Satyendra Sinha, who became Under-Secretary of State for India and was raised to the peerage of the United Kingdom in 1919. Indians had actually "sat" in the House of Lords before that; for example, the deposed ruler of the Punjab, Maharajah Duleep Singh, was seated on one of the woolsacks by special command of

Queen Victoria in 1854, on a ceremonial occasion. But he was not a member of the House; and the woolsacks are, in any event, strictly speaking, regarded as outside it. GEORGE CHOWDHARY-BEST
London SW3

End of the drought

The water industry has no wish to be a labelled a "prophet of gloom" (report, 4 February), but it is really surprising that it's still cautious about the prospects for the UK's water supplies?

Of the 17 companies represented by the Water Companies Association, seven rate their underground supplies as low, two are restricting the use of hoses, pipes and sprinklers, and six believe substantial rainfall over the next two months is needed. Yes, surface reservoirs are fuller than normal but in East Anglia, up to 50 per cent of water comes from underground - and that's where the problem is.

So is the drought over? In terms of rainfall, yes. But in terms of the amount of water available for public supplies, we'll only really know the answer to that in April. PAMELA TAYLOR
Chief Executive
The Water Companies Association
London SW1

Sir: One good thing about the water shortage was that it had begun to remind us of the value of natural resources we had been taking for granted. Should we now resume throwing that idea out with the bath water? PETER LANYON
Leiston, Suffolk

Food fights

By elevating personal experience to universal truth, Kathy Harvey ("Give me fish fingers - again and again", 4 February) perpetuates the myth that children are naturally fussy and reluctant eaters, and that refusing to eat is somehow "normal".

Some families treat a shared meal as a pleasure, both because it is a sociable occasion and because they like eating. The children generally enjoy their food, but if on a particular occasion they do not feel like eating what is offered, they are free to leave it and it is no big deal. They are not pleased with, or ordered to eat: eating is a normal response to their own hunger, and not something done to please others.

Others (or "every parent", as Kathy Harvey would have it) treat eating as an unfortunate necessity, to be foisted on unwilling children by stealth (eg toddlers fed amidst a circus parade of distracting toys), threats or bribery. The children, understandably, come to view everything put on their plate with deep suspicion, and to take a certain pleasure in the ritual games played out each time they push it away.

Parents need to realise that they are free to choose which group they join. PAUL STYLES
JOANNA GOYDER
Brussels

Fear of tax forms

I was delighted when the Inland Revenue moved to self-assessment because it seemed to give the opportunity, for the first time, to get a correct

assessment of my tax liabilities without continual arguments with my local inspector.

The form was not impossible to complete. It did require a little thought, but no more than the previous tax return form. The example given in your report "A paper-chasing, form-filling nightmare" (29 January) suggests that inertia and fear have been the greatest problems in meeting the deadline.

My sympathies, for once, are with the Inland Revenue. J R SMART
Wokingham, Berkshire

Our national bear

The Labour hackbencher Gwyneth Dunwoody should be commended for drawing our attention to the plight of the Pooh Five (report, 6 February). Personally, however, I'd be happy to let New York keep the stuffed toys in return for the removal from our television screens of the indescribable Americanised Disney cartoon version of our national bear. MARK WILSON
Leeds

Winnie-the-Pooh and friends are in for a shock should they return to this country if, as your headline suggests ("A scandal that would rock Seven Acre Wood", 6 February), what was once the 100 Acre Wood has shrunk to a mere seven acres. Is this yet another example of the intolerable pressures on our countryside? MARK BURGESS
Taunton, Somerset

Free dome

I was a 20-year-old working boy at the time of the Festival of Britain in 1951 (letter, 3 February) and, although I went to the site several times and enjoyed the free attractions, I was never able to afford the dome. This time, since it is the people's money that is building the Millennium Dome, why cannot we all get in free? LOUIS LAWRENCE
Ventnor, Isle of Wight

Short memories

New Labour spent £1.5m on an advertising campaign aimed at addressing the recruitment crisis in teaching, with the slogan "No one forgets a good teacher". The announcement on pay (report, 30 January) would suggest the Government has done just that. PETER G WARD
Roxton, Cheshire

QUOTE UNQUOTE

My job is to be noble and fine - Clare Short, Secretary of State for Overseas Development

Before Blair tries to suck up to the IRA by apologising for Bloody Sunday, shouldn't the IRA apologise for the bloody Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday they have inflicted on the people of this country? - Lord Tebbit, Tory peer

Some young writers cannot get their work produced if they don't set out to shock. And so many people I know are reluctant to go to the theatre because there is so much filth and violence - Peter Wolff, philanthropist

Ever since my daughter was born, I feel the fleetingness of time, and I don't want to waste it on getting the perfect lip colour - Madonna, pop singer

The worst career move any tyrant can make is to soften the regime - George Walden, former Tory minister

It is an Opposition of trivial pursuits, frankly, at the moment - Tony Blair

I was writing my PhD thesis on reduced dimensionality in molecular representation when we decided to write the tackiest, glitziest film instead - Tom Barlow, a research fellow at Balliol, Oxford, who co-wrote a screenplay for the movie 'Married to Malcom'

The Scottish people will one day become extinct - John Vincent, historian, on the Scots' falling birthrate

Lottery tickets, golf balls and gold fillings – finders keepers



DAVID AARONOVITCH IN PURSUIT OF LOST PROPERTY

It is hardly surprising that the family of Juan Villasanté Paz were not paying attention when – 10 days ago – the draw was made for Spanish national lottery. For, two hours earlier, the 76-year-old Galician retired roadworker had had a heart attack and popped his clogs. Within the week his niece, Maria Antonia Alonso, and the other family members, had buried their elderly relative in his best suit.

Only when the story emerged that the winning ticket had not been produced, and the £2m had not been claimed, did the grieving relatives realise that the outstanding numbers matched those drawn by the deceased man. In which case his ticket, wherever it might be, was now the passport to vast riches. But where was it?

Leisurely searches through the old man's small dwelling must have become ever more frantic, as the ticket failed to be found. It was not in the chest of drawers. It was not inside an empty biscuit tin in the larder. It was not under the mattress. It was not even in the pockets of any of his clothes. Or wasn't it? There was, of course, they realised, one suit no one had looked in. And that was hurried under six feet of Galician soil.

It must have been a painful moment for the appalled family – none of them wealthy – when it dawned upon them that, if they were to enjoy the fruits of Providence, they would first have to exhume Uncle Juan. As I write, their application for this spot of Juanupmanship is still under consideration.

But this raises an important legal and moral question. Can it be said that proceeds of the subterranean ticket, even if they do manage to retrieve it, actually belong to them? Can the money be part of the estate of Mr Villasanté Paz, given that he died before the winning ticket was actually drawn?

Consider the situation had Juan – thinking himself a man of modest means – left a will stating that his house, say, and most of his money should go to Maria Antonia, and that the residue (which he believed to be nearly nothing) should be given to her evil (and fictional) sister Fortunata. If the residue now contains the winnings from the ticket, Fortunata will be a wealthy woman, free to indulge her dark and expensive Galician whims.

Bank that one, and let us now return to Britain and to Stafford Crown Court, where, this week, a landmark judgment was made concerning the ownership of another kind of lost treasure – golf balls. The suit centred on a series of "water hazards" (a generic golfing term for ponds, lakes and puddles) in which the more inept golfers at the Branstree Golf and Country Club were continually losing their golf balls.

Twice a year, the court heard, the professional golfers and caddies at the club dredged the hazards – as they were entitled to do by virtue of the club's rules – retrieved the balls and sold them in the club shop at 50p a throw.

This happy arrangement was recently disrupted by two enterprising Leeds men, Gary Thewlis and Philip Rzonca, who descended upon the club at dead of night dressed in wetsuits, gathered up the balls, and set off back for home. A policeman intercepted them, and discovered their booty in the back of the car. They were arrested and charged with theft. The golf club confidently expected conviction and restitution of their pilfered property.

Amazingly the judge thought otherwise. Judge Simon Tonking advised the jury that "property which has been abandoned cannot be stolen". He continued – even more extraordinarily – "if property has not been abandoned, but a defendant genuinely believed that it had, that defendant cannot be convicted of theft." The jury agreed and Messrs Thewlis and Rzonca were acquitted.

Finally our tour takes us to Montpellier, in the South of France, where a number of local gravediggers were this week charged with the theft – over 15 years – of thousands of pounds worth of gold fillings, jewellery and clothing from corpses buried in the Saint-Lazare cemetery. One of the disgraced men was found to have one pound or more of dental gold in his house. Most of their loot was procured when bodies were being exhumed, after the leases on plots had expired.

The Montpellier miscreants must hope that their case is heard before the French equivalent of Judge Tonking. For if leaving gold in a hole for eternity is not abandonment of property, then God knows what is. Under the Tonking rules there would not be the slightest chance of conviction.

And the same fear must surely impel the family of Juan Villasanté Paz to speedy action. For all I know Mr Thewlis or Mr Rzonca may be purchasers of *The Independent*, and even now to be co-opted among the millions of readers poring, as you do, over these words. Even now they may make calls to Spain, or calling up "Galician Cemeteries" on the Internet. For if the lottery ticket has been abandoned – and may be claimed by the man who holds it – the investment in two second-class seats to Bilbao, a pickaxe, a spade and a lantern will seem small by comparison with the riches that await. Fortunata, beware!

Monica Lewinsky was not America's only intern – what do the rest do?

ALISSA QUART UNPAID AND UNEQUAL

The White House sex scandal has put Monica Lewinsky in the news with many unsavoury appellations – not the least of them "former White House intern". As the nation's most famous intern, Lewinsky is – like the thousands of the other post-teen inhabitants of America's bottom work rung – a paradox of powerlessness and privilege.

Despite the gilded cage in which she is now trapped, I "feel the pain" of the former intern. Or rather, I've felt that pain, as both an intern and a "girl". As an intern (in New York City), I've read out loud the daily newspaper followed by an alphabetised list of phone calls, while my "boss" received his in-office message. And I've watched others experience far more miserable and hapless bouts doing the middle-class slave labour euphemised as "interning".

President Clinton's 24-year-old alleged paramour radiates a spoiled sort of vulnerability. In her 1995 White House internship, she was an unpaid assistant serving the Bellway's power élite. Of course, she was also an indulged doctor's daughter, wealthy enough to labour without remuneration. It's the combination of pampered pre-adulthood and humiliating insignificance that has contributed to the lack of sympathy for her in the press. Her intern status makes her an even tackier joke, as evidenced in accounts of her adolescent stay at a weight-loss camp and her parents' Southern California divorce settlement which included the cost of her therapy.

According to people who track internships, 75 per cent of interns (ie worker trainees) are college students, and 50 to 60 per cent of them work for nothing. Clean, assured, often hearing degrees from fancy liberal arts colleges, the uncompensated apprentice usually learns, over the course of her (or his) internship, some very important life lessons. Like how to sit still, how to order bottled water, how to know how to highers-up and perhaps how to sabotage office culture – which is part of how to navigate it (one intern I know spent his research hours racking up calls to sex services on the company's dime).

I've heard of young women



No press sympathy: Monica, with her father and stepmother outside a restaurant in Los Angeles

Alpha

getting asked on dates, in awe of 40-year-old editors with balding pate and a suspicious mastery of the slang of their intern's generation. I've also seen young men quickly exchange their student sycophancy for a more advanced, clean-shaven toadyism.

Lewinsky's legally a woman but she is known as a "girl" by the press. In her case, the link between her appellations "girl" and "ex-intern" are hardly coincidental. The mixture of vulnerability and special attention associated with being

power with their young unpaid female employees. As a safeguard against that imbalance, ABC News has all its interns watch a video about harassment in the workplace. Economic exploitation of interns is more common than boss-to-internal sexual harassment. Intern-tormenting is so common a pursuit, it appears in Scott Adams popular comic strip of office culture, Dilbert.

Yet internship literature, from guidebooks to newspapers, usually presents internships as "learning experiences"

and has an extensive application. White House interns answer correspondence from constituents. Some get to work on the White House Web site.

Uncompensated work is effective at one thing: helping the professional class to reproduce itself. Who else but rich kids can afford to work in stylish companies for nothing? Part of the sweaty bargain of the intern economy is that once the adult paid job is obtained, the intern gets to forget her hours of prior servility. But Monica Lewinsky, the per-

some interns do learn a few things – other than that they are not as smart as their professors told them they were, that their fear of the fax machine is up-tilly, and that in the real world, older men like younger women and will stare at them across a divider. In one internship, I learned I wanted to be a journalist. Some friends received valuable training interning at newspapers.

On the other hand, somewhat ominously, I watched unpaid workers about to be discarded learn to talk of their own institutions in terms of "we", as in "We produced that songstress video." A budding new journalist I know decided against a first-hand experience of her boss and an elaborate, whisky-fuelled night of power and subjection. According to Hillary Abramson, editor of the forthcoming guidebook *America's Top Internships*, and, as one might imagine, a supporter of the institution, both sexual harassment of interns and boss-trainee dating are uncommon. As for Monica Lewinsky, Abramson says that Lewinsky has simply drawn attention to one of America's top internships. And, adds Abramson: "She's shown that internships do provide you with connections."

The writer is a journalist and former intern in New York City.

America's most famous intern – like thousands of unpaid post-teen workers – is a paradox of powerlessness and privilege

There are even pundits who urge young people to go payless, writing tracts such as Bob Weinstein's *I'll Work For Free!* Interning's ever-increasing popularity is cheered on by magazines that depend on interns to do their grimmer research and filing. American glamour industries draw heavily from this pool of free or very cheap labour. MTV "employs" up to 200 at a go. In contrast, *The Late Show With David Letterman* offers a mere 30 unpaid positions. *The Internship Bible*, a guide to the subject for prospective trainees, lists more than 100,000 internships. The White House is one of them – according to *The Bible* there are 1,200 applicants per year for 200 positions. The programme calls for "enthusiastic students"

petual former intern, will never get to live down this deflating life stage. Let her case bring attention to the decrepitude and worthlessness of internships. Where's the "opportunity" in pouring toner into copiers, of having only youth and good skin on your side when you try to leave the office before seven?

Most of the training the trainee receives is in office power disparities. Of course,

Bulgaria in Crisis

Emergency Appeal to Independent Readers

LEFT TO FREEZE

Children like Yordan, 14, already malnourished could die from cold and hunger this January unless aid reaches them now. With temperatures plummeting to -15° Yordan's scant clothing and no shoes offer him little protection from the bitter cold and there is no money to heat his orphanage. There are 37,000 places in Bulgaria's orphanages.

Cold weather alert

No Money To Feed The Children No Money To Heat The Orphanages

Bulgaria is a country in the midst of a serious economic crisis. Now thousands of children are suffering terribly as winter reaches its coldest point. Urgent help is needed.

There is little money to heat the orphanages. Orphanage Directors are having to beg for food from local villages and rarely know where the next meal is coming from. In some areas children, like Yordan, are going hungry and the cold could prove fatal for many children this winter. Without aid this could be catastrophic for Bulgaria's orphanage children.

The European Children's Trust, sister charity of The Romanian Orphanage Trust, is ready to distribute emergency food packs, clothes and fuel to the orphanages in most need.

Your gift today will save lives and bring hope.

Please send whatever you can to help children survive the winter or call 01273 299309 NOW

I enclose £ to save Bulgarian orphanage children. Cheques to The European Children's Trust, FREEPOST

Card no. Expiry date

Signature Date

Mr/Ms/Miss/Ms

Address

Postcode

Telephone no.

Return to: Tanya Barton, (114), Bulgarian Emergency Appeal, The European Children's Trust, FREEPOST

KB339, 644 Queen Street, LONDON, EC4R 4AR or call 01273 299309 NOW. Registered Charity No. 803070

Please act NOW - winter is here

Why the Dependent Territories are like a virgin ...



TREVOR PHILLIPS FROM HERE TO ST HELENA

In the Department of Revisionist History, there are few more fertile areas of invention than sex. There are lessons for politicians here. In both sex and politics, the urge to stretch the truth to enhance your reputation is almost irresistible. Who has never been tempted to make the account of a past romantic experience longer, stronger and more exciting than it really was? After all, in most cases there are only two competing accounts of the events concerned; and most of the time it flatters both parties to paint the encounters in Technicolor. But up until now, I had always believed that there was

one piece of history that women would not be able to embellish: either you are a virgin or you aren't. There should be no risk of ambiguity – Chimonesque definitions of sex notwithstanding. Trust the Dutch to make fools of us all.

According to the *British Medical Journal*, doctors in the Netherlands are "reconstructing" the hymens of young brides-to-be, particularly among minority communities. The reason is that the women – and their families – are terrified that should their new husbands find out the truth, the young women will be shunned, abandoned and worse. It seems a small thing to do to prevent a lifetime's humiliation and unhappiness; but is it right to subject women to such grotesque treatment in order to satisfy male vanity? Or to put it another way, would any sensible woman choose to marry a man who is so wound up about this part of her past that he would regard her previous sexual partners as a personal insult?

I thought that sort of no-brain nonsense was reserved for members of Europe's royal families, who seem to care so deeply about these things that their sons can be forced into spectacularly unsuitable marriages. It really isn't an issue for

a grown-up society. There are cases where previous intercourse has been "forced"; but surely the young women are hardly to blame.

However these matters aside, this kind of surgery raises another fundamental, maybe metaphysical question: is a reconstructed virgin the same as the original article? That is to say, after you have had the experience, even if you are eventually returned to the original physical state are you actually the same person, or are the changes simply hidden? And should it matter to your new spouse? In physics, it is well known that if you pass an electric current through a magnet, and then remove the current, the magnet looks and feels the same but that it never behaves in quite the same way again. There is even a peculiarly appropriate name for it: hysteresis, from the Greek word for "coming late"; nuff said.

All of this takes us quite naturally to Mr Robin Cook who being a man of the world will understand the problem of distinguishing the real thing from the manufactured article. This week he announced the Government's plans to reconstruct the connective tissue between this country and the so-called Dependent Territories scattered

all over the world. They include tiny places with romantic names like Anguilla, Pitcairn Islands, St Helena, the South Sandwich Islands, and naturally enough, the British Virgin Islands. These were all formerly part of the great empire on which the sun never set, their presence on early maps of the world largely justified only because British navigators needed to know where to find water, and after the first few colonists settled, where to drop the supplies. Otherwise they were simply rocks in the sea. Of course, we came to know and love the Falklands 15 years ago, but for the most part these places have hardly ever figured on our consciousness.

That is why, back in 1962, the then Conservative government was able, through the Commonwealth Immigrants Act, effectively to rupture their relationship with the UK, remove these British subjects' rights to come to the mother country and to cast them adrift in unfriendly seas. The break took place at the height of the era of decolonisation, when both main parties could argue that it was the colonies that demanded their freedom, and that whatever they lost from London's economic support would be made up for in international aid. But there was ever any

real intention of a quid pro quo. The French held their colonies close even after independence; the British waved goodbye and closed the door. Granted, those that proved to be valuable staging posts for the Navy have been well-treated; and Bermuda, the Caymans and Gibraltar have built brilliantly on that base to create economically self-sufficient countries. However, many, such as Montserrat, were virtually destroyed after being abandoned by the imperial power. They remain pitiful, clinging wretches, hoping constantly for a smile of approbation from their former sponsor, caddling an extra dollar in aid here, a new hospital there.

Mr Cook's decision to bring these territories back into the warm embrace of the former power is a noble one. There are no votes in it, and some of his colleagues are as always fearful that people will say that Labour plans to swamp us with people who still carry spears. It is unlikely that there will be a flood of new applicants for entry; the maximum number who could apply to settle in the UK is about 160,000, and as far as those territories around the Caribbean and Atlantic are concerned, the preferred destination now is the US, where West Indians are remarkably successful immigrants.

In any event, Cook's alleged arrogance is serving him well; in this case he is dismissing silly, fearful nonsense about immigration in order to do the right thing. In particular, he is rightly holding out for these people to have British passports; it is the least we can do for people who helped Britain to project its military power across the globe at vital moments.

However, Robin Cook and Baroness Symons need to be aware that however well they repair the break, the 36 years since 1962 have changed both sides in this relationship. The Dependent Territories that I know still feel culturally British, but they no longer have the automatic deference of colonial people. They no longer believe that every pound of aid money and every diplomatic concession is a boon from the Crown; their leaders are men and women steeped in politics, and loyal to their own people rather than the majesty of a far-flung empire. And they will not be shy about asking for some share of the wealth that they helped to create as vital strategic links in the map of British naval power. It is right to revive the relationship; but after 36 years, these renewed virgins may not be as soft and yielding as the first time around.

Pru's plan for £25m centre raises stakes in telebank war

The battle to dominate the UK's burgeoning market in telebanking grew more ferocious yesterday as three banks announced plans to double the staff they employ to answer calls. As Andrew Verity reports, the telebanking boom will bring thousands of jobs to towns where traditional industry has been devastated.

Prudential, Bank of Scotland and Standard Life all announced plans to double the numbers they employ in telebanking in a bid to capitalise on a boom which has drawn in thousands of new customers every week.

Prudential is to create 1,500 jobs in a brand new call centre in

Derby, quadrupling the numbers employed at call centres. Its existing centre in Dudley has already drawn in 115,000 new customers.

An investment of £25m will build a call centre in Pride Park, Derby, which is nearly twice the length of Derby County's football pitch, giving a much-needed shot in the arm for the local economy. Many new staff will be taken on as part of the Government's "New Deal" on jobs for the unemployed.

Mike Harris, chief executive of Prudential Banking, said: "I am confident we can continue to develop employment opportunities in Derby, building on the initial investment of up to 1,500 jobs over the next few years."

Bank of Scotland, which already employs 470 staff, is raising the numbers it employs to 710 in the next few months to cope with mushrooming demand for accounts run in partnership with Sainsbury's.

Standard Life, which opened its new bank just one month ago, is set to boost staff numbers far beyond its original expectations. When the bank was launched in January, it expected to employ just 100 staff to handle calls.

After receiving 65,000 calls in one month, taking £165m in deposits and opening 23,000 new accounts, Standard Life has run out of space for much-needed new staff. Yesterday it confirmed it will buy 114,000 square feet of vacant space next to its head office in Edinburgh and recruit a further 400 staff. The bank hopes to open to business customers within a month. "Business has been phenomenal," said Jim Spewart, managing director of Standard Life Bank.

Halifax is also joining the telebanking bandwagon and plans to sell mortgages and life insurance over the phone later this year. Its call centre in Leeds, which currently employs 500 staff, is likely

to expand up to its capacity of 1,300.

The boom in jobs dealing with customers over the phone is not confined to banking. Leisure groups such as EMI are also doing an increasing amount of business over the phone.

According to the Glasgow Development Agency, Scotland alone will see jobs in call centres more than double to 37,000 by the year 2000. With 120 call centres already running across Scotland, the industry has quintupled in the last five years.

While most traditional banks already offer some telebanking services, take-up has been small. But in the last two years, the entry of new players such as Scottish Widows, Tesco, Sainsbury and Standard Life, all offering high rates of interest on accessible deposit accounts, has put them on the back foot.

NatWest is now piloting a high-interest account, offering more than 6 per cent with instant access, but has not publicised it.

Ian McNuff, head of telephony at NatWest, said telephone contact had doubled in the last five years, even for high street banks. "We expect in 1998 to receive some 100 million contacts by phone with the customers. That makes it the fastest growing part of any financial services business."

"The Pru's move simply recognises that customers are now more confident with dealing over the phone."

John McCann, a spokesman for the agency, said: "The growth in the last five to six years has been staggering. From Scotland's perspective, we now have a very well-developed service sector. Since the old industries have gone, there's a whole generation which is now used to seven-day opening, seven-day working, seven-day playing."

Wages for staff at call centres tend to be under £10,000, with higher wages for more complex jobs such as selling insurance. A telesales operator in banking will usually be paid £4.60 an hour – or £9,000 a year.

Employers tend to ask only for a "customer service background" – which can include any retail job.

Midlands accent 'will not put customers off'

Prudential's decision to locate in Derby was yesterday seen as a rebuff to many in the industry who insisted customers would be put off by a Midlands accent.

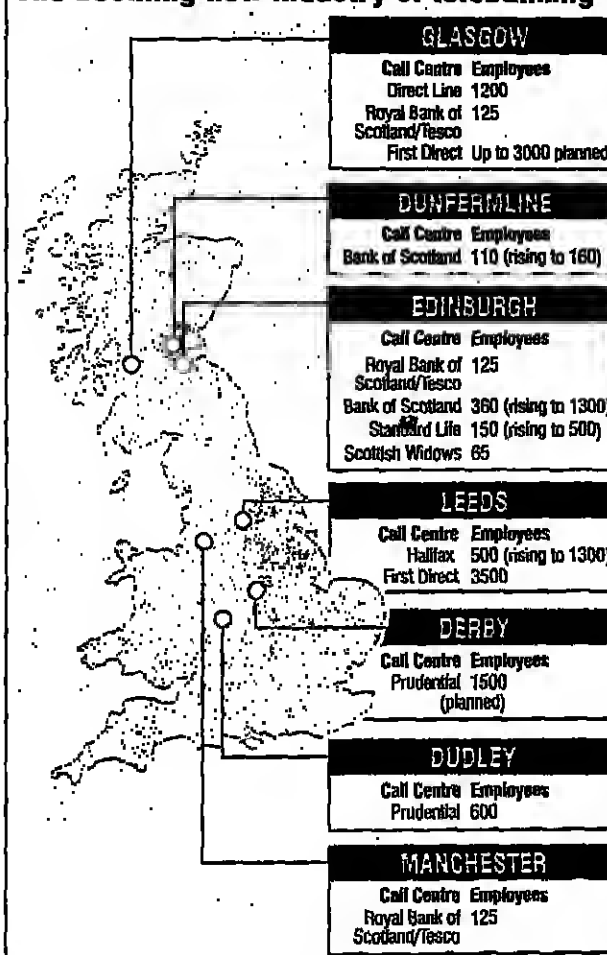
"We researched lots of factors before choosing the site at Derby and one was the regional accent," said a spokesman for the Pru. "It came out very well in the research. It's seen as quite soft and welcoming."

The Pru has also defied a prediction that Midlands call centres would fail. Research by Scottish banks has suggested the Scots accent is seen as clear, well-spoken and friendly.

The West Midlands accent was unfairly perceived by outsiders as indicating stupidity. "There's a very low incidence of call centres in the Midlands," said Mr John McCann, of the Glasgow Development Agency.

But the Pru said its centre in Dudley had seen unprecedented success in attracting callers.

The booming new industry of telebanking



Upping the ante: Increased production is likely at the Burnaston plant (above) after losses

Photograph: Raymond's

Toyota to cut UK costs as sterling takes its toll

Toyota, the Japanese car maker, is redoubling efforts to cut costs at its Burnaston plant in Derbyshire after its UK operations plunged into loss last year because of the strong pound.

Three quarters of Burnaston's output is exported to the Continent and the strength of sterling is thought to have wiped out profits in 1997. In 1996, Toyota Motor Manufacturing UK made £10m, up from £1m the year before.

The cost-cutting measures are likely to take the form of raising productivity levels further at Burnaston and driving down component costs. Bryan Jackson, the director of TMMUK responsible for finance, declined to give details of Burnaston's financial performance last year.

But he said: "Like many exporters, we have been hit by the strong pound. Because we can-

not raise prices we have to tackle our production costs."

Production costs at Burnaston are 10 per cent higher than those of Toyota's car plants in Japan and the US and a priority will be to reduce this gap.

Last year Burnaston, which employs 2,650, raised productivity levels by 5 per cent. Production will increase from 105,000 to 160,000 this year with production of a second Corolla model beginning in September. But Toyota only plans to take on an extra 300 workers to cope with the increase. Output from the plant next year will rise to 220,000.

Burnaston's component purchases will double from £500m last year to £1bn in 1999. Half of its 200 suppliers are British and they account for 60 per cent of the components bought by value.

Toyota said it did not expect this ratio to change even after the introduction of the single European currency. Mr Jackson said TMMUK had not yet decided whether to follow Rover's lead by requiring all its suppliers to deal in euros from 1 January next year. A study team is examining the impact on Burnaston of the launch of the single currency.

Toyota aims to raise total European sales to 520,000 this year from 470,000 in 1997 as part of a global strategy of increasing world wide sales to five million.

It expects the overall European market to grow by only 2-3 per cent this year but expects its own sales to grow much more strongly in Germany, France, the UK, Italy and Spain.

Meanwhile, Toyota appeared to rule out joining the auction for the luxury car maker Rolls-Royce, which has been put up for sale by its parent company Vickers. Asked whether Toyota had requested a copy of the memorandum of sale from Rolls' financial advisers, Lazards, the president of Toyota Motor Europe, Tatsuo Takahashi, said: "To my knowledge we have had no discussions, no negotiations, nothing."

— Michael Harrison

Sainsbury's bank proves a hit with customers

J Sainsbury, the supermarket giant, yesterday revealed that its new bank was proving a big hit with customers, attracting more than 10,000 accounts a week. Sainsbury's bank, which was opened less than a year ago, now has more than 600,000 accounts with deposits of more than £1.4bn.

Sainsbury's appears to have fought off a strong challenge from Safeway, which recently launched an account offering 7.4 per cent interest, higher than the 6.5 per cent offered to

Sainsbury's customers. Mike Dennis, food retailing analyst at SG Securities, said: "This is a great performance from the banking business. Their account is easier to run than Safeway's and they have a more loyal customer base."

Sainsbury is now looking to rapidly expand its banking business. A Sainsbury spokesman said: "We are looking to build up our personal loans and mortgage business, lending more of the money we have on deposit."

There was also a strong performance from Homebase, the DIY retailer, where buoyant Christmas trading helped like-for-like sales rise 9.8 per cent. The good figures spread optimism around the DIY sector. Shares in Boots, owner of Do it All, jumped 38.5p to 893p, and Kingfisher, which runs B&Q, rose 16p to 987p.

However Sainsbury, once Britain's most popular grocer, is falling further behind arch rival Tesco which is now by far the biggest food retailer in the country with more than 15 per cent of the market. Like-for-like supermarket sales growth slowed to 3.2 per cent in the 16 weeks to 10 January, compared to the 5 per cent growth the company was achieving last year.

The figure is well short of the 6.5 per cent that Tesco announced recently. But Sainsbury said gross margins had held firm. "They're a good set of results, it's just that Tesco's results were better. So it's not bad, could do better," said Clive Vaughan of research group Verdict.

The directors, led by deputy chairman Peter Marshall, who was deputy chief executive of

Sainsbury said that its 24 hour opening programme over Christmas has proved very popular with customers and it planned to extend the scheme. "Our customers are telling us that it made shopping easier and lead to shorter queues at the check out."

The group also plans to open 18 new stores this year and 19 next, including 3 more stores in Northern Ireland as it seeks to expand outside England.

— Andrew Yates

Countrywide network fined £250,000 in pensions scandal

Countrywide, the UK's second largest network of independent financial advisers, was yesterday fined £250,000 for one of the worst cases to date of failure to clear up the pension mis-selling scandal.

The Personal Investment Authority slammed the company for fundamental misconduct. It said Countrywide had even failed to identify who might be eligible for compensation over mis-selling.

In its findings, the PIA said Countrywide failed to pay out who was on the urgent list for compensation – including people who had died or retired since being mis-sold a personal pension by an IFA.

The regulator said the network failed to monitor how much effort its members had made to look after the interests of victims of mis-selling, even though Countrywide was set up on the basis that it was responsible for individual members' regulation. It also failed to check whether the information given by its member firms was accurate.

A FINE RECORD

Company	Date	Fine (£)
London & Manchester Friends Provident	28/1/98	525,000
DBS Financial Management	30/9/97	450,000
Albany Life	3/9/97	425,000
Countrywide	2/12/97	375,000
M&E Network	6/2/98	250,000
Lincoln Independent	14/8/97	100,000
Barkley Independent	8/7/97	75,000
Source: PIA	23/4/97	70,000

Thousands of clients were owed on average £8,000 each – money which had gone to paying for the IFAs' commission and life insurer's charges rather than to the client's retirement fund.

The regulator said the network failed to monitor how much effort its members had made to look after the interests of victims of mis-selling, even though Countrywide was set up on the basis that it was responsible for individual members' regulation. It also failed to check whether the information given by its member firms was accurate.

The fine is the fifth largest to be levied over mis-selling. Among the criteria used to decide the fine were the severity of the mis-selling, the firm's size and its attitude to the regulator.

However, the PIA pointed out that it had been aware of the need to clear up the cases more than two and a half years before, when regulators began the effort to clear up the scandal.

The regulator said Countrywide had now increased resources dedicated to compensating customers. But the network had missed the crucial December deadline for sorting out 90 per cent of the most urgent cases.

— Andrew Verity

Institutions may go to court over Astec buyout plans

An acrimonious boardroom split at Astec (BSR), the power supply manufacturer, intensified yesterday after two leading shareholders revealed they were considering going to court to resolve a dispute over future control of the company.

Royal & Sun Alliance and Electra Fleming, two of the company's biggest institutional investors, stepped up the pressure on Emerson, the US

engineering giant which controls 51 per cent of Astec. Emerson astonished non-executive directors of Astec last month when it announced plans to buy out minority investors, remove three executive directors from the board and stop paying out dividends.

The two shareholders last night said they were "considering court proceedings" against Emerson under section 459 of the Companies Act,

which deals with attempts by big investors to prejudice the interests of other shareholders.

In a statement Royal & Sun Alliance, which speaks for just over 5 per cent of Astec, added that Emerson was "considered to be influencing the affairs of the company to the detriment of other shareholders."

The institution cited the move by Emerson to call an extraordinary shareholders meeting

to approve the changes. Last month 18 institutions put their names to a letter condemning the plans as a "blatant disregard" of their interests.

The news came after independent directors of Astec opposed to Emerson's plans yesterday called on shareholders to consider the legal position.

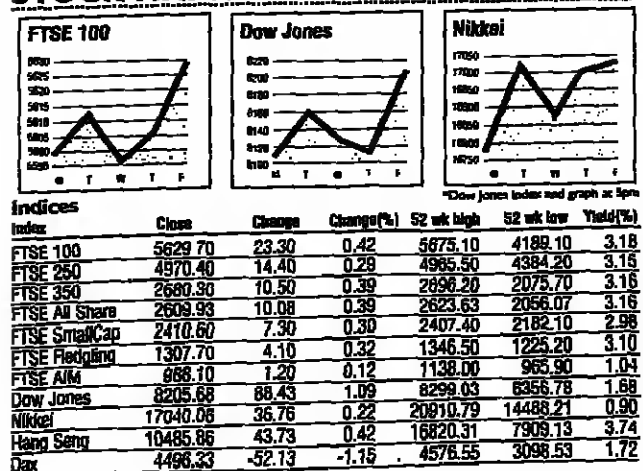
The directors, led by deputy chairman Peter Marshall, who was deputy chief executive of

the former Plessey electronics and defence business, said dissident directors were prevented from going to court themselves under company law.

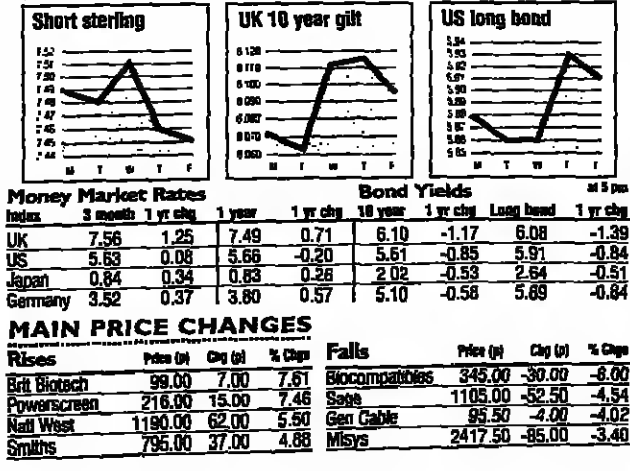
Although Emerson has not launched a formal offer to take full control of Astec, it outlined an indicative bid to buy the shares at the current market price, which yesterday fell 0.5p to 124p.

— Chris Godsmark

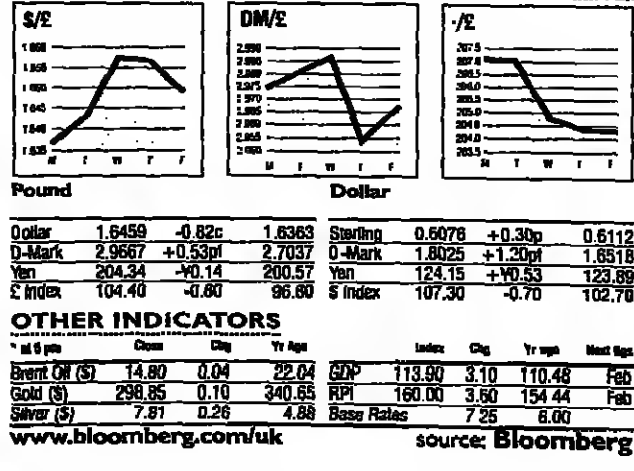
STOCK MARKETS



INTEREST RATES



CURRENCIES



TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.35	Italy (lira)	2,834
Austria (schillings)	20.06	Japan (yen)	201.03
Belgium (francs)	59.00	Malta (lira)	0.62
Canada (\$)	2.28	Netherlands (guilders)	3.21
Cyprus (pounds)	0.84	Norway (kroner)	11.97
Denmark (kroner)	10.95	Portugal (escudos)	200.85
Finland (markka)	8.76	Spain (pesetas)	240.83
France (francs)	9.55	South Africa (rand)	7.74
Germany (marks)	2.86	Sweden (kroner)	12.85
Greece (drachmas)	452.29	Switzerland (francs)	2.31
Hong Kong (\$)	12.30	Turkey (lira)	348,460
Ireland (pounds)	1.14	USA (\$)	1.60

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

هكذا من الأصل



JEREMY WARNER
ON HOW THE
EURO MIGHT
DAMAGE
THE CITY'S
POSITION
AS EUROPE'S
LEADING
FINANCIAL
CENTRE

Why the City should fear the single currency

Can the City hope to survive as Europe's pre-eminent financial centre after monetary union? The general view in the City, shared and articulated by Eddie George, Governor of the Bank of England, is that it can; that it is so far ahead in terms of infrastructure and critical mass of Frankfurt, Paris and Milan that none of them is capable of catching up. Furthermore, the argument goes, the City's position might actually be enhanced if Britain stays out of the single currency; it would positively thrive as an entrepot between Europe and the rest of the world.

Is this all just complacency, or is London's position in financial markets indeed an unassailable one? Until quite recently I would have argued the latter, but I'm now not so sure. It won't happen overnight, it may even take several decades, but I'm beginning to think that the City might one day get overtaken and eventually trounced.

This needs some explaining, for at the moment all the evidence rather points in the other direction.

Nearly all the big continental players with investment banking and capital market pretensions have chosen London as their European base for these activities. Because of language and cultural ties, the City also makes an obvious choice of location for US investment and commercial banks. This creates a snow ball effect. If the Americans and Europeans chose London, then the Japanese and other Asian economies must follow in their wake. And so on and so forth.

So attractive has the City's formula become that a number of US investment bankers have gone beyond merely using London as a base for Eu-

ropean business, and begun quietly shifting international operations, where location is important, away from their financial centre of domicile and into London.

At the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, this week, one leading US investment banker admitted privately that he had become so disillusioned with the byzantine capital and regulatory requirements of New York, that significant parts of his bank's derivatives book would be moved to London over the next year.

After an exhaustive study of more than 50 possible alternative locations, including a number of offshore centres, he had concluded that the City had the most attractive combination of regulatory requirements and trading infrastructure anywhere in the world.

Does that mean, then, that foreigners come to London because of its relative lack of regulation compared to rivals? Not at all, he insisted. This was not an attempt to escape regulation. But he did believe London was more in tune with and adapted to the needs of practitioners. He also liked the way City regulation was being consolidated into a single organisation, the Financial Services Authority, which he believed mirrored trends in the market place.

The decision, moreover, had been entirely influenced by the approach of the single currency, or any kind of a judgement on whether Britain would be in or out. Trading financial instruments is a "virtual" activity which could as easily be located on the other side of the moon as London, Frankfurt or New York provided it had a phone line and a computer terminal.

All this would rather back the view that the City's position is safe. So long as London remains a groovy place to live, and as important, its tax regime relatively benign, the foreigner will continue to flock in. Others have compared its position to that of the Wimbledon tennis tournament. This is a good parallel if an exact one. The event and place is quintessentially English, but virtually all the players are foreign and they love playing here. As a result, Wimbledon remains the most prestigious tournament in the world, despite our lack of players of international stature.

I suspect, however, that this is also where London's greatest weakness as a financial centre lies. At the moment the City prospers as an international market place almost wholly divorced from the rest of the UK economy. Most of what happens there in terms of securities and foreign exchange dealing is largely irrelevant to the rest of the country.

That's not to say the vast flows of international capital that run through the City don't have an effect on the UK economy. They do; because the City is pivotal to the way capital is allocated nationally and internationally. It is a far more powerful force in the land than Gordon Brown and the Government. But in the sense that this trading of capital could be conducted from almost anywhere in the world and still have the same effect, it is not relevant to the lives of most ordinary people. The same is obviously not true of a manufacturing plant or a street market.

All this makes the City quite unlike the world's other two main financial centres - New York and Tokyo. Both of these centres exist pri-

marily for the purpose of servicing the vast domestic economies from which they spring. The City is different. Think of New York and the image that springs to mind is of a tiny head on top of the Arnold Schwarzenegger type body of the US domestic economy. Think of the City and what you have is a vast head on top of a puny and dispensable little body.

Lying just across the Channel, however is the Continent, soon to be united by the single currency. While the euro looked like being a currency confined to just France, Germany, Austria and the Benelux countries, the City could have carried on much as before thriving as an offshore centre for Anglo-Saxon speculators. But now it looks as if the single currency will be launched in January next year on a much wider basis, with 11 or more countries. An economic unit potentially far more powerful than Japan or even the US will come into existence and it will need a comparable capital markets infrastructure to service it.

It is possible that the City will somehow or other manage to graft itself onto this giant new single European body. That becomes less likely if Britain isn't in at the start of the single currency, but the exercise may be impossible anyway. All depends on the extent to which the euro establishes itself as a viable alternative reserve currency and store of value to the dollar. To do so it must create an integrated capital markets infrastructure with comparable liquidity to that of the US. That means primarily an integrated debt market capable of attracting Japanese and other international capital on the same scale as New York.

I hesitate to pontificate about a field I am no expert on, so I'll let Howard Lutnick, chief executive of the specialist New York primary dealer, Cantor Fitzgerald, do the talking for me. According to Mr Lutnick, the creation of such a market depends vitally on establishing a benchmark instrument about which all others can trade.

In the US this instrument is the Treasury long bond. Whichever financial centre manages to lay claim to the benchmark, be it London, Frankfurt, Paris or Milan, will eventually inherit the crown jewels. Trading will naturally gravitate to this centre and banks will therefore want to locate there. Corporate finance, forces, equity, futures trading and all the other things you associate with a major financial centre would follow in their wake.

Since the issuer most likely to create this benchmark is either Germany or France, the City in this scenario is in a perilous position. What's to stop the City seizing this benchmark where ever it is created and using it to its own purposes? For the answer look no further than this week's news that Frankfurt has finally overtaken London in the most traded derivatives contract in Europe, the German 10 year Government bond future. Germany, in other words, has claimed back its inheritance and it will fight tooth and nail not to lose it again. The City's best hope of retaining its present position long term, then, is if the euro is a disaster or fails to create the benchmark instrument Mr Lutnick talks of. In those circumstances, London becomes the default centre. It would be foolish to count on that happening, however.

Slump in industry was behind Bank's decision on rates

Official figures indicating that British industry is on the verge of recession explained the Bank of England's decision not to raise interest rates earlier this week. The latest US evidence, meanwhile, showed it is still enjoying bumper growth. Diane Coyle, Economics Editor, reports.

December saw a 0.2 per cent drop in industrial output, the fifth month running it had declined, confounding economists who had expected a rebound in production following the recent publication of more upbeat business surveys. Manufacturing output, the biggest component of the total, fell by 0.5 per cent, its third monthly decline running.

The figures mean industrial production has now suffered its weakest stretch since 1991. Another monthly drop

would put industry technically into recession, the definition of which is two successive quarters of declining output.

The weakness went across the board in manufacturing, with monthly gains in only food, drink and tobacco and petrol refining. Outside manufacturing, both electricity, gas and water supply and oil and gas production rebounded after a very weak November.

A combination of falling exports as a result of the strong pound and slower growth in demand in home markets lies behind the depressing performance. Some City analysts expressed doubt about the reliability of the figures, but most saw them as a vindication of the Monetary Policy Committee's decision to leave the cost of borrowing unchanged.

Michael Saunders at Salomon Smith Barney said interest rates had now reached their peak. "Collapsing exports will produce very weak growth in the first half of 1998," he said.

Although this was the widespread view, some dissenters

said the official figures were implausibly weak.

There was some support for the minority opinion that there are still inflationary dangers in a report that pay deals are running further ahead of inflation this month. Incomes Data Services said almost half of the 40 deals they had monitored were for 4 per cent or more, and two - covering IT staff at Barclays and House of Fraser employees - were in double figures.

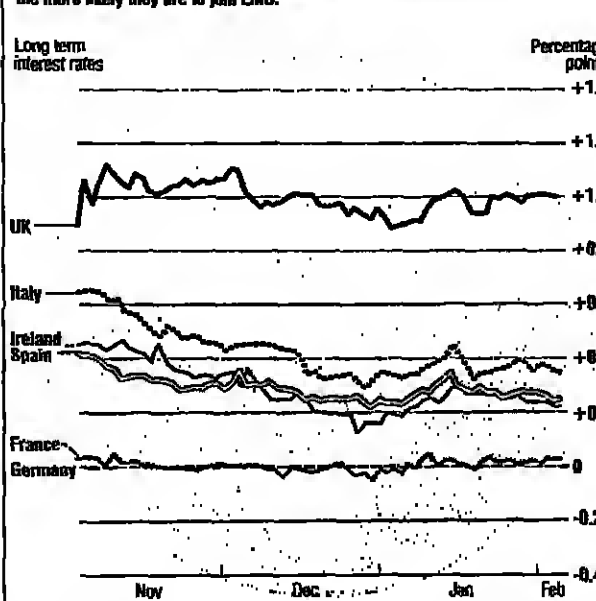
Still, figures from across the Atlantic yesterday, greeted with delight by President Clinton, left little doubt that the British economy is far weaker than the US.

The American economy created 358,000 non-farm jobs last month, and in the latest three months has been generating jobs at an annual rate of 4.5 million. The proportion of the US workforce currently in work is, at 64.2 per cent, the highest ever.

The figures also showed a jump in the average working week from 34.6 to 34.8 hours.

Who will be in EMU? The financial markets' view

The closer other countries get to the dashed baseline (Germany) the more likely they are to join EMU.



TOWARDS EMU: If the line moves towards the German base line it means investors no longer require such a high premium for holding that country's bonds compared to German ones, because they are confident the country won't default against the mark. In other words, they think that country will be locked into a single currency with Germany in 10 years' time.

AWAY FROM EMU: However, if they think the country won't be in EMU, that it will have higher inflation, and that there is a risk of a future devaluation against the mark, then they will demand an extra premium for holding that country's bonds, so the line will move away from the base.

When will EMU start? The City Analysts' View.

The independent analysts from: Nikdo Europe, Paine Webber, ABN Amro, JP Morgan, Deutsche Morgan Grenfell, Salomon Brothers, Goldman Sachs, HSBC, James Capel, UBS

Probability EMU starts on time:	89%	(87% last week)
Probability EMU is delayed:	8%	(10% last week)
Probability EMU never happens:	3%	(3% last week)

Italy calms Germany's fears for euro

Italian charm last week won over sceptical German politicians, boosting the City's assessment of the chances of European economic and monetary union (EMU) starting on 1 January 1999. Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, the Italian Finance Minister, toured Germany to calm fears that his country's debt problems could weaken the credibility of the euro.

The German parliament's economics committee, whose support will be crucial when Germans vote on the euro this May, gave Mr Ciampi a ringing endorsement. A statement said that Italy could converge "in and through the euro".

The Independent's panel of economists now believes the financial risk of ditching Italy is greater than the risk of keeping it on board. Mr Ciampi said Italy's national debt, running at 120 per cent of gross domestic product, will reduce to 100 per cent in the next few years. This allows it to match a loose version of the Maastricht criteria.

Both Nikdo Europe and James Capel raised their odds on a punctual EMU. Only ABN Amro and Goldman Sachs think there is a 20 per cent chance it will not go ahead on time.

— Andrew Verity

Biocompatible shares plunge after chief leaves

The value of shares in Biocompatible, the healthcare company, plunged by more than 40 per cent yesterday, after it announced that Alistair Taylor had resigned as president and chief executive. A company spokeswoman said he had lost the confidence of the board in his ability to find marketing partners for the company's innovative products. The shares fell 160p to 215p, wiping £11m off its market value.

The board has formed a management committee which will be chaired by Jeremy Curnock Cook, ahead of the appointment of a new chief executive. In a statement the company said: "The management committee will focus on progressing on going discussions with potential commercial partners as well as reviewing the options for independent distribution of the company's stents in some markets."

Navy work goes to Vosper

The government yesterday approved a plan to transfer some Royal Navy support services to Flagship Training, a subsidiary for Vosper Thornycroft, the shipbuilder, in a contract worth £300m over 13 years. The move is intended to cut government defence spending and is still subject to consultation with trade unions. The agreement applies to some 434 civil service posts and 550 Royal Navy uniformed posts at the Naval Recruiting and Training Agency. Vosper Thornycroft owns 37 per cent of Flagship.

Marconi Instruments sold

GEC, the defence and electronics group, has sold its Marconi Instruments unit to IFR Systems, a US test instrumentation maker, for £65m. The sale includes Marconi Instruments in the UK and Marconi Instruments Inc in the US, as well as units in France, Spain and Germany. GEC said, Marconi, which makes electronic test equipment, made a pre-tax profit of £4.5m on sales of £65.9m in the year to March 31, 1997.

BOC in £40m investment

BOC Group, the industrial gases group, said yesterday it would invest more than £40m in new production facilities at Margram in South Wales following a supply contract from British Steel. The investment will lift the quantity of industrial gases it supplies to a British Steel plant at Port Talbot to almost 3,000 tonnes per day.

Bodycote buys TI unit

Bodycote International, the engineering services company has bought Thermal Processing Group from engineering company TI Group for £15.1m in cash. TPG, which provides heat treatment and metal joining services to the UK engineering sector, made operating profits of £1.7m in 1997. The purchase increases the number of heat treatment plants owned by Bodycote in the UK to 17 from 13.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Blue Group (Q)	220.9m (220.2m)	2.1m (1.2m)	0.8p (0.5p)	0.3p (0.2p)
Standard Bank (Q)	3.6m (4.0m)	0.18m (0.35m)	2.5p (4.7p)	0.75p (0.75p)
ICI Holdings (Q)	2.8m (2.6m)	0.01m (0.24m)	0.1p (22.2p)	2.5p (N/A)
Blue Pharm. (Q)	28.8m (28.8m)	2.45m (2.10m)	0.3p (0.2p)	

(Q) - First (Q) - Interim. EPS is pre-exceptionals. Dividend to be paid as a FID.

US senator seeks to block SBC-UBS deal

The multi-billion merger between the Swiss banking giants SBC and UBS, which would create the world's second largest bank, faces a challenge in the United States, it emerged yesterday.

Afonso D'Amato, a leading US Senator, has called on Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, to block the deal.

Mr D'Amato, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee and a critic of Switzerland's World War Two role, urged the Fed not to bless the merger until the banks give a clearer accounting of their handling of dormant Holocaust-era ac-

counts and their business ties with Nazi Germany.

Mr D'Amato wrote: "SBC and UBS have yet to provide answers to a host of questions regarding their conduct regarding the disposition of assets of Holocaust victims and their heirs, as well as their record of collaboration with the Nazis during the war."

Mr D'Amato also urged the Fed to make sure the Swiss Federal Banking Commission met US bank supervision standards.

In his letter, Mr D'Amato, a New York Republican, also highlighted the scale of the losses from UBS's London-

based equity derivatives department which he said could be as high as \$689m (£430m). UBS denied the claim, saying its derivatives trading losses were limited to £190m.

Mr D'Amato said the issue of the losses meant the effectiveness of Swiss bank supervisors was "open to serious question".

Fed approval for the US business of the new bank is important because it has large asset management and investment banking activities in the US and wants to expand those businesses.

Yesterday the two Swiss banking giants said they were

confident American authorities would approve their merger plan. SBC spokesman Christoph Meier said: "The Fed will examine this merger in a fair and factual manner. We are very confident. I don't see any danger."

UBS said the attack by Mr D'Amato was "disconcerting". UBS spokesman Robert Vogler said: "We have indications that the Fed will not mix Holocaust issues with merger issues."

Shareholders of both banks voted overwhelmingly this week to merge the two and form the world's second biggest bank by assets.

— Reuters

Microsoft in talks with Flextech over interactive television

Microsoft, the global computer software giant, is considering a move into the emerging UK digital interactive television market which would represent a serious challenge to the planned offerings from satellite and cable operators.

It emerged yesterday that discussions were under way between Microsoft and Flextech, the pay television group which could see the two companies collaborate on a rival interactive service. Shares in Flextech rose 15p to 502.5p, though sources indicated the talks were at a "very early stage" and were just one of a

number of potential ventures under discussion.

A push by Microsoft would throw down the gauntlet to British Interactive Broadcasting (BIB), the satellite venture part owned by BSkyB, and British Telecom, which aims to launch a service offering home banking, shopping and educational channels by the end of the year.

Flextech has already launched a home shopping channel called Screenshop and plans a travel shopping channel in the spring, though in both cases customers have to use the telephone to buy goods or making bookings.

— Chris Godsmark

WHO'S SUING WHO

JOHN WILLCOCK



Virgin, Ladbrokes, Marks & Spencer and Sainsbury's have together won a landmark legal action against a company which registered over 100 domain names on the internet using some of the biggest names in British business, and then offered them for sale.

Dinah Nissen, a partner with Harbottle & Lewis, the solicitors representing Richard Branson's Virgin group, says the court victory over the One in a Million company is "the first of its kind in the UK. This will send out a message to people involved in this kind of activity that the courts won't take kindly to it".

The two defendants, Richard Conway and Julian Nicholson, registered a series of famous names as domains on the internet and then offered some of them for sale. The domains registered included virgin.org and BT.org. Mr Conway wrote to Burger King offering to sell it the domain burgerking.co.uk for £25,000.

The four plaintiffs were trying to stop the duo from doing so by alleging trademark infringement and passing off. The defendants

have won the right to appeal, and the case will probably be heard this spring, but Ms Nissen is confident the decision will be upheld.

"There are those that argue that the internet should be a 'free for all'... but where an action infringes someone else's rights [the law must apply]," she said.

Domain names do not just act as addresses, but also have a trademark purpose, she says. In other words, it is perfectly reasonable that BMW, for the sake of argument, would want a domain name such as bmw.com rather than abc.com.

Ms Nissen sees such legal arguments about the internet growing as its influence over our lives grows, through advertising and the like. The US government this week proposed to introduce a range of new suffixes to domain names to ease congestion on the Internet, and this will only produce new challenges to brand owners, she says.

While the case was being heard in front of Jonathan Sumption QC, sitting as a deputy judge in the High Court, the One in a Mil-

lion company registered barbotte.com as a domain name. Ms Nissen was philosophical about the move; she will not be taking action over it.

I've just come across a copy of a writ lodged by "Phil Collins Limited" against two American musicians, Rahimie Michael Davis and Louis Satterfield. The writ defines the plaintiff as "a company incorporated under the laws of England and Wales, and is and was at all times entitled to the recording services of the popular musician Phil Collins". Makes a change from "bald rocker", I suppose.

Anyway, the ex-drummer for Genesis is claiming that he overpaid royalties to these two backing musicians relating to his 1990 world tour. Mr Collins is claiming repayment of US\$392,965.98 from each of them, plus interest.

Mr Collins claims that under an agreement dated 6 December 1989 the duo were due royalties on a record he subsequently released of the live show, but only on the con-

dition that they had played on all 15 of the live recordings. In fact there had been a mistake, and they had each played on only five recordings.

Royal & Sun Alliance Trust Company together with 20 individual investors has lodged a writ against Healey & Baker, the surveyors, and 22 other parties over the valuation the surveyors put on a business park in 1992.

The writ claims that Healey & Baker overvalued the property, Units 1-17 Sextant Park, Medway City Estate, Rochester Kent, when it was purchased by the North-west Kent Trust in 1992.

Royal & Sun Alliance has since taken over from Midland Bank as the trustees of the Property Enterprise Zone Trust. Such Trusts were set up by the previous Government to enable investors to use tax advantages when putting money into property. Such Trusts have since been abolished, and the Trust in the writ ceases to exist as a legal entity at the end of February. Royal and Sun therefore took

the precautionary measure of lodging the writ to keep the issue alive.

Asil Nadir's business empire Polly Peck went bust seven years ago, but much of the litigation started soon afterwards by liquidators Deloitte & Touche is still going on. Last week the liquidators, led by Chris Morris, switched solicitors for their action against Polly Peck's former auditors, Stoy Hayward, from Dibb Lupton Alsop to Freshfields, a rival City law firm. The liquidators will continue to use Dibb Lupton on most of the other Polly Peck business, and would not give the reason for the switch.

Glaxo Group, part of drugs giant Glaxo Wellcome, is suing Lagap Pharmaceuticals of Woolmer Way, Bordon, Hampshire, for damages over a patent infringement.

A spokeswoman for Glaxo said yesterday: "We are claiming recovery of damages for what we believe to be past infringements of Salbutamol Syrup." She would not be drawn, however, on how much Glaxo is seeking.

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Top five performing funds of each sector are highlighted in bold. All funds are more than one year old. Fund steps taken on the first day of the previous month. Fund performances are calculated on an after-tax basis, based on total income reinvested at Xid date and illustrate the value of \$100,000 invested.

3 denotes a fund available through a Manager's PEP scheme.

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Information on this and other topics will be changed. Prices and information

The finest fish in the world – netted in the Thames

Herring from the Thames estuary are expected to become the first fish in the world to be certified as ecologically correct. That's because the men who catch it are, essentially, peasants of the sea.

In an age when oceans and continental shelves are being pillaged by hi-tech catchers, they fish a couple of miles off Essex on day-long trips, using methods which have changed little in the past 100 years: small boats, large-mesh nets and a lot of manual labour.

It is cold, back-straining, often meagrely rewarded work, especially this winter, when unusually warm water has delayed the shoaling of the fish. But the West Mersea fishermen and a couple of other small harbours near by have rules and methods which safeguard the distinctive stock of local herring in the loog term. (It is a sub-species with one vertebrae less than those farther out into the North Sea.)

That is why the new Marine Stewardship Council, an in-

ternational organisation set up by the World Wide Fund for Nature and the food and fish multinational Unilever, hopes to grant them its first certificate for sustainable fishing.

Whoever sells their herring will be able to label the packaging boasting of this, easing the corporate conscience and probably allowing a premium price to be charged. "If someone in Islington wants to pay extra for our herrings, that's just fine," said John Jowers, a West Mersea fish merchant and chairman of the local fishermen's co-operative. "But we're as interested in conserving local jobs and communities as in conserving the fish."

The boats use a long line of curtain-shaped drift nets with a diagonal mesh at least 54mm across. They are left hanging in the water for several hours: tiddlers swim through, while big fish find their way barred and bounce off. But mature herring, aged two years or more, are trapped. Once their heads get through the mesh the



Sea harvest: Fishermen in West Mersea sorting a catch. Thames estuary herring will be the first fish in the world to be certified as ecologically correct. Photograph: David Rose

rest is too big to pass through, but they cannot swim back because their gill covers snag the filaments. Unlike a lot of North Sea fishing, theirs is targeted: nearly everything in the nets is adult herring. They catch none of the juvenile fish so vital to the stocks' future. Next to nothing gets chucked over the side. There are 14 boats involved and in summer they catch bass and Dover sole.

They only go after herring during the season, from October to March, sticking to rules written and theoretically enforced by the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries for the northern side of the Thames estuary. The boats must be under 17m long, can only use drift nets and the total quota for all of them is 131 tonnes a year, which one big trawler could catch in less than an hour.

Mr Jowers says it was the fishermen who demanded the constraints to conserve stocks, who stuck to them for years before the ministry made them law and who enforce them among themselves. He reckons 100 local jobs rely on the fishery, with their herring trucked to markets around Britain and on the Continent. Some families from West Mersea, near Colchester, have been catching

herring since the Middle Ages. "It provides a good living for kids who are never going to get lots of exams at school. If a place like this loses its local working community it just becomes a dormitory suburb ... It's no longer a pleasant place to live."

In the harbour, skipper Chrissy Mole and his crewman were shaking about 30 stone of herring out of his nets. That

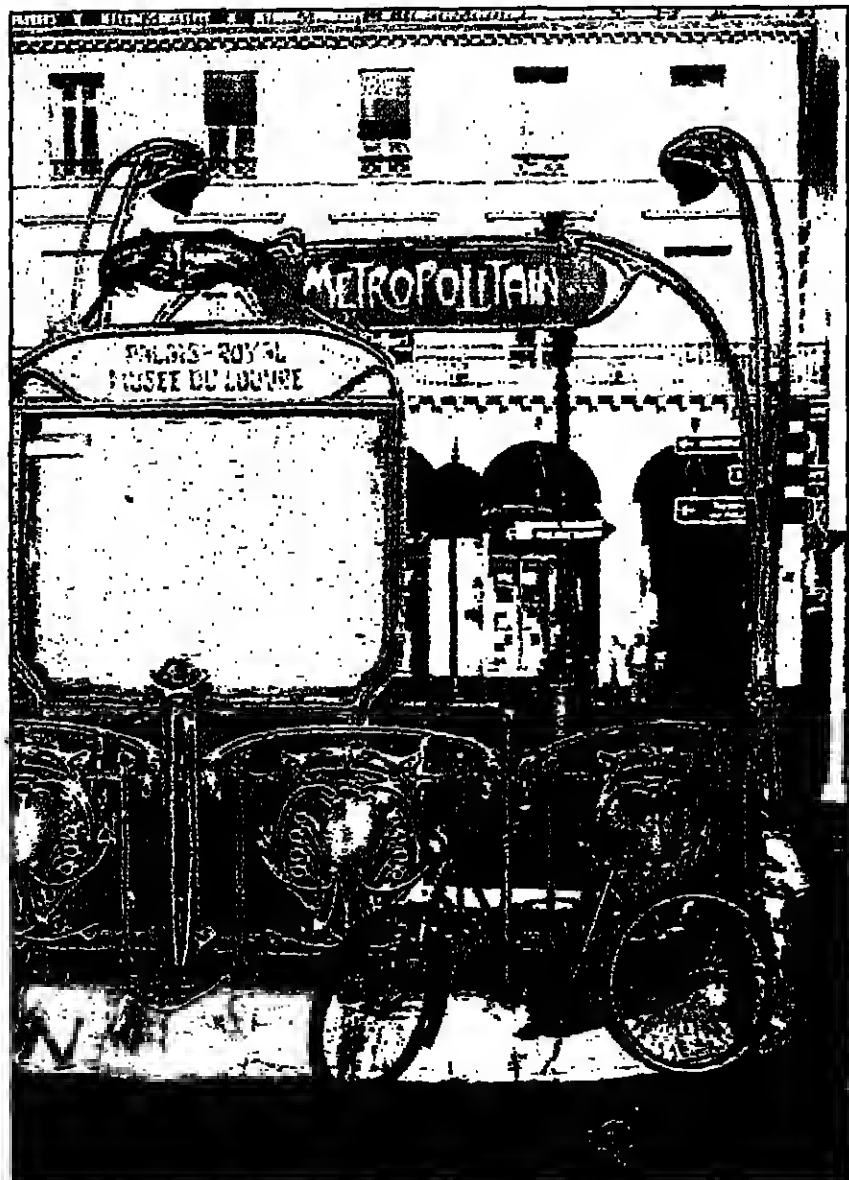
would fetch about £70, not much for catching the tide at 3am and not getting back until 4pm. "It's not an easy job and a lot of people don't like doing it," he said. He and Matthew Howard, another West Mersea fisherman, co-chaired about their methods being certified by the Marine Stewardship Council. "When we tell people how we catch herring, they look at us as if

we're mad," said Mr Howard. Certification, which, it is hoped, will be completed by October, will not dramatically hike the price of their fish but could guarantee a decent market throughout the season, avoiding the 'occasional' collapses to 50p a stone, which make it not worth their while to go to sea.

— Nicholas Schoon
Environment Correspondent

Spring time in Paris from £85

THE INDEPENDENT
INDEPENDENT
ON SUNDAY



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mous Opera Comique:

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TIME OFF

هكذا من الأصل

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 7 February 1998



Prayer wheels and apple pie

Following the route of the holy Kali Gandaki river, Alysia Cook treks through the heart of the Himalayas.

There are moments when you wonder why on earth you have come on holiday. This was one of them. I was freezing and wide awake, but dawn was still nine hours away. Half-way through a week's trek in Nepal, it was not the first time I regretted my choice of sleeping-bag. The February days brought clear skies, bright sunshine and paths devoid of the large trekking groups that descend in autumn and spring, yet the nights were bitter.

Plenty of companies both in Britain and Nepal offer organised treks, but it is possible to make your own arrangements. We had decided to follow the route of the holy Kali Gandaki river, high in the heart of the Himalayas, down to Pokhara, a peaceful lakeside town at the mountains' base. Acting on a tip from another trekker, we flew first by light air-

craft from Pokhara up to the isolated community of Jomsom close to the Tibetan border.

Departures in both directions are at the mercy of the fierce winds that gust up the valley, and trekkers who walk up, with the intention of flying down, can often get stranded in Jomsom for a day or two. By starting from the top we would avoid this possibility. Our fellow passengers were mainly Thakalis, Tibetan-blooded people who inhabit the upper valley. Whereas my companion and I had wrestled for a window seat, a Thakali woman across the aisle buried her head in her shawl throughout the flight, fixedly ignoring the dramatic scenery.

Airborne, we passed deeply-cleft mountains, first wrinkled with rice terraces, then cloaked in thickly layered forest and finally capped with snow. The plane's altimeter, visible through the open cockpit door, nudged 9,000ft on landing.

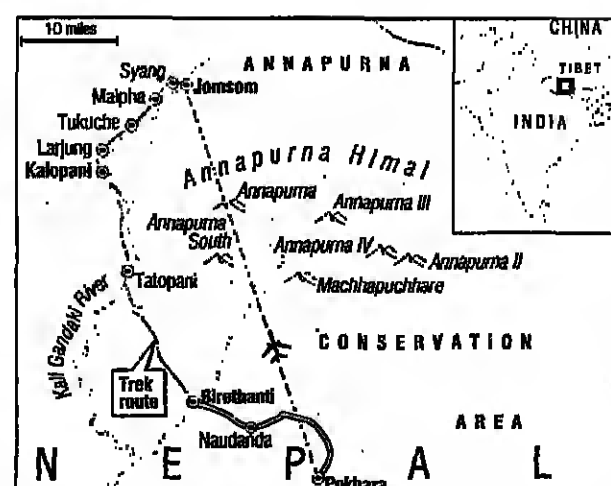
Deposited on the Tarmac at Jomsom, we found ourselves in a stark landscape with white summits piercing the skyline. The dawn cold still lingered in the air and we hastily donned

the down jackets we had hired in Pokhara - a snip at 20 rupees (about 20p) a day. Outside the airport gates, Thakali women sold us a breakfast of dried apple rings. An impassive official, hovering to stamp our trekking permits, directed us down a rocky path to begin our descent.

Our journey would take us along a third of the Annapurna Circuit, a popular three-week trek encircling the quintet of Annapurna peaks and their neighbour, the distinctive Machhapuchhare, or Fish Tail. Today this well-trodden route is dubbed the "apple pie trail", a reference to the culinary comforts sold by the numerous trekking lodges lining the trail.

Only minutes into our trek, a young Nepalese woman approached us and, gesturing that she was alone, asked if she might walk with us. A quick look at the map established that she was heading for the community of Beni, some three days' walk away. So we set off in a threesome towards the first village, Syang.

She must have thought us very strange, stopping first to dig out gloves and hats; then



to adjust a rubbing strap; yet again to remove a layer of clothing. Clad in her thin shawl and sandals, she watched fascinated, exhibiting just the tiniest show of impatience if we dallied too long.

Less than 50 years ago the Kali Gandaki valley was a major trade route, where the Thakalis bartered grain, cloth and cigarettes with their Tibetan neighbours in return for salt, turquoise and wool. These merchants also profited by providing lodging for the passing

traders. Yet the decline in trade with Tibet after Chinese occupation, combined with competition from cheap Indian salt, forced them to seek alternative business. With the growth in tourism, many Thakalis converted their trader accommodation into trekking lodges. Stumbling into a cosy guest house after a day's walk, we had much cause to laud the Thakalis' commercial adaptability.

Finding accommodation was easy at this time of year, and we had our pick of the

In the heartland of the Himalayas: rice terraces below the distinctive Machhapuchhare, or Fish Tail mountain. Photograph: Staffan Widstrand/Bruce Coleman

lodges. Generally, one lodge always stood out from the rest, marked by its superior food, or a foot-warmer beneath the dining-table. In Kalopani, we bade farewell to our young companion and spent our first night playing cards while the lodge owner's wife brought us plates of steaming rice, dhal and curious, fried Tibetan bread.

Most of the lodges are run by Thakali women, masterminding the tourist trade while their husbands work outside the valley. Unusually, the Kalopani Lodge owner happened to be at home. Unlike his quiet, traditionally clad wife, he was dressed in modern clothes and spoke perfect, businesslike English. He had not slept for 36 hours, having driven overnight from Kathmandu to Pokhara to catch the flight to Jomsom, then ridden straight to Kalopani. "I am a little tired" was his understated reaction to the journey.

We found that reaching a lodge by sunset required a fair

degree of skill in estimating our walking capabilities. On the first two days we trekked for seven hours beneath laden rucksacks, and still only just made it to our target village before dark. While our lungs and muscles did toughen, it was impossible not to feel puny beside the barefoot locals who tramped past us carrying huge loads.

Frequently we met mule or buffalo trains winding up the hill, kicking up clouds of dust in their wake. Although charming to look at, with their jangling bells and colourful loads, these beasts became distinctly less appealing when a passing rump pushed us to the edge of the trail, a steaming memento was deposited en route at our feet (though we were grateful for these natural markers later in the trek, when the path was obscured by a landslide).

The villages where we stopped for sustenance were from medieval times. Maipha, with its narrow paved streets, the once prosperous Tukuche,

its grand merchants' houses now faded and crumbling; Larjung with its hillside temples and caves. Outside each village would be a Buddhist *chorten*, a stone pyramid lined with prayer wheels, which we respectfully passed clockwise as custom required.

Indiana Jones-style, we crossed suspension bridges slung over cascading water, scrambled over landslides and climbed through cool forests. The broad valley at the start of the trail, roofed with blue skies and gleaming mountain peaks, softened miraculously into emerald ricefields and groves of orange and lemon trees. As the altitude changed so did our attitude towards comfort. Approaching the village of Tatopani, at 3,904ft, our anticipation mounted, for *tato pani* means hot water, or springs, and the place's reputation as an oasis for weary travellers is well deserved. After three days of icy sponge baths, soothing our aching limbs

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INSIDE: CITY BREAK SKIING WINTER OLYMPICS RUGBY UNION FOOTBALL
Marrakesh/2 Day trips for enthusiasts/6 All downhill for Maier/14 Bracken the England lynchpin/18 The Everton revival/22

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SIMON CALDER

In six days' time we will experience the first of this year's three Fridays the 13th. In February, March and November people will be touching wood, crossing fingers or simply staying in bed for fear of courting disaster. Some will be deterred from flying.

After Tuesday's horrific accident where a US military aircraft tore into a cable car at the Italian resort of Cavalese, killing 20 holiday-makers, reading Terry Denham's *World Directory of Airliner Crashes* may seem ghoulish. But this book reveals how relatively safe is aviation, and that, historically, Friday the 13th is no more nor less dangerous than any other day.

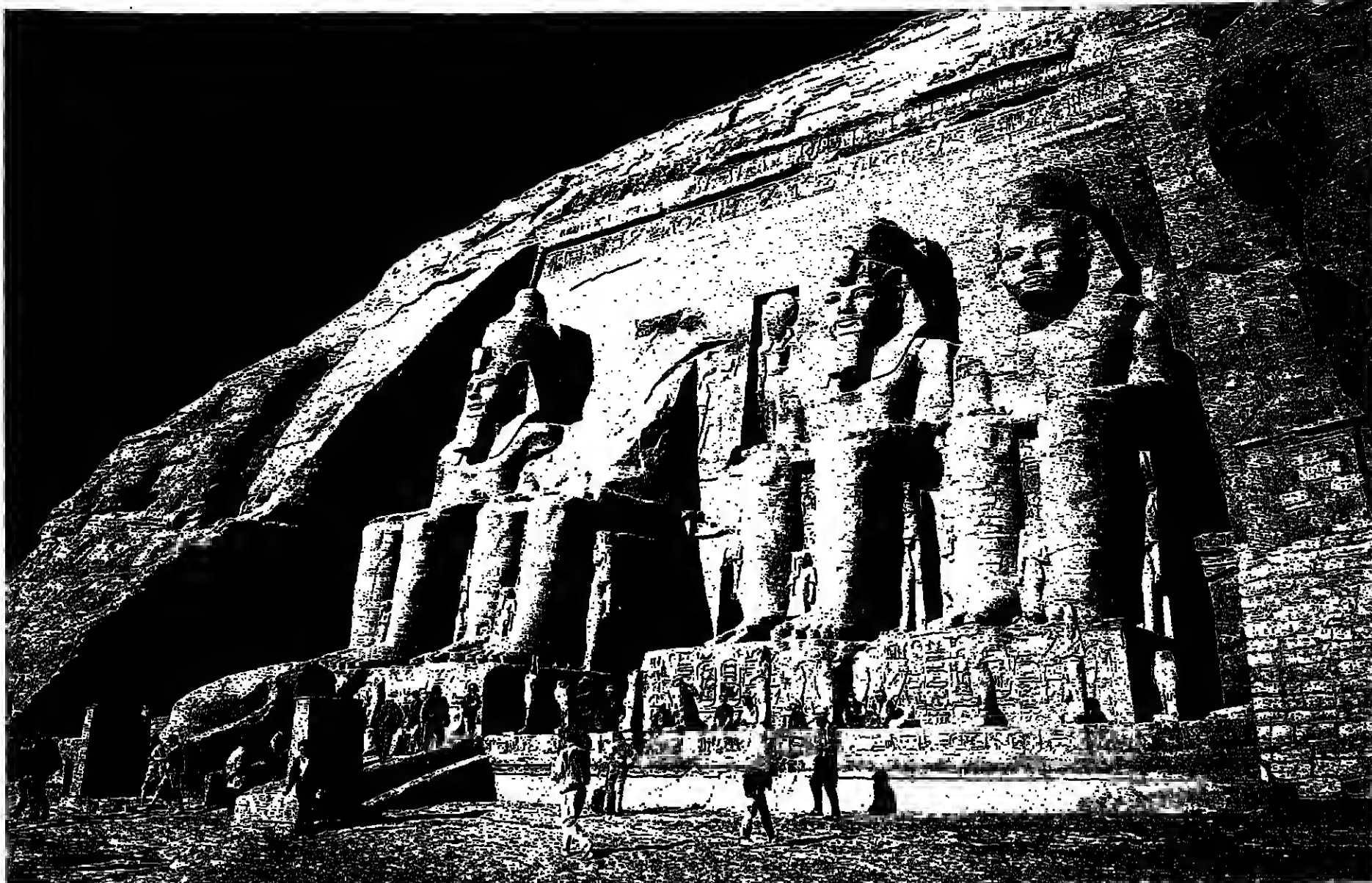
On average, four air travellers perish each day somewhere in the world. (Coincidentally, this is the same frequency as British people dying from accidental overdoses of opiates, according to Radio 4's *Medicine Now*.)

Airlines are loath to boast about safety records, for fear of tempting fate. Qantas, you will recall, was the airline that Dustin Hoffman's character insisted on flying in the film *Rain Man*, because of its clean safety record. Yet the Australian airline has had its fair share of prangs. Mr Denham records no fewer than 16 accidents, from a crash on take-off from Jericho, Queensland in 1923 to another crash on take-off in Mauritius in 1960. But the airline has never had an accident with a passenger fatality.

For the vast majority of us, the biggest disaster when flying is losing our luggage – or getting films wiped by airport security machines, as happened to the unfortunate BBC crew whose stock was blighted by an X-ray scanning machine at Manchester airport: their five-week filming assignment in Papua New Guinea was nullified by a single blast of radiation.

Permit me to write from the experience of my previous employment as a security guard at Gatwick. As the furious film-makers have now discovered, there are two kinds of airport X-ray machines. Those you see when passing through security controls are puny little devices, the equivalent of a Reliant Robin in terms of the radiation they generate; I happily watch camera film, magnetic tape and computer discs float down the conveyor belt and through the machine, confident that they will survive unscathed. Even the monstrous scanners at Sheremetyevo airport in Moscow have failed to blur words or images.

The stuff that goes on out of sight is a different matter. Ten years after the Lockerbie disaster, the aviation world is trying to make sure that explosives contained within hold baggage can be identified to avoid a repeat terrorist attack. Searching every bag by hand is a logistical impossibility – it used to be tricky enough checking everyone's luggage on the Belfast and Tel Aviv flights. The best alternative so far discovered is a machine called the CTX5000, a Juggernaut of the scanning world. Manchester is leading the world in screening every piece of checked baggage, and the BAA airports like Heathrow and Gatwick are not far behind. No security guard I know, past or present, would ever entrust any sensitive item to such rigorous screening – but then you should never, ever, check in anything you can't afford to lose.



Abu Simbel might be one of Egypt's most breathtaking sights, but while you're there ask your tour guide a few pertinent political questions

Photograph: Robert Harding Picture Library

Question time in the near East

Go and visit Petra, Jerusalem and Damascus, by all means. But while you're there, set the tour guides thinking – your remarks just could make a difference to human lives.

Back in the days of the Greek colonels, Labour ministers would appear on television – along with the exiled actress Melina Mercouri – urging British holiday-makers to avoid Greece and its islands. The regime in Athens was oppressing its own people, they said, banning free elections and torturing opponents. Tourism there would support the economy of a brutal dictatorship, the British were told. But today, despite moralistic "mission statements" from Robin Cook and his chums, the Foreign Office issues warnings about visiting only those countries in which Britons might be in danger – not the countries which might be a danger to their own people.

Today, therefore, holiday-makers flock to the eastern Mediterranean without a thought for the evils that go on around their air-conditioned hotels and tour buses, unaware that their money is supporting regimes that have perfected the art of torture chairs, extrajudicial killing and fake elections. That's no reason not to visit them – if economic sanctions don't work in the Middle East, tourist sanctions certainly won't. But this doesn't mean you can't ask – politely, without intending to cause offence – about the less savoury aspects of the country into which you are pouring your hard-earned pounds. Here's a guide.

Turkey: Enjoy the beaches, the wine, the Topkapi museum. But why not ask that friendly tour guide what's happening in the forbidden south east? Is it true that thousands of Kurds have been "resettled" by the government, that hundreds have been mysteriously assassinated (by policemen as well as by the ruthless Kurdish Workers Party)? Why does Amnesty International carry repeated reports of police torture? And why aren't the Armenians mentioned in the local guidebook? Because there are

none left? (Answer: because the Turks massacred 1.5 million of them in the world's first genocide in 1915, but have never admitted it.)

Egypt: Take in the Pyramids by all means. And the Tutankhamun treasures. Even Luxor, despite the recent massacre. But why not ask the tour guide to point out the Lazhough Street security police headquarters in central Cairo – systematic torture with electrodes is carried out against suspected militants on two floors of the building. If travelling outside the capital, ask the friendly guide where the Tora prison complex is – it's where opposition militants are given women's names and forced to rape each other as a punishment. If you're staying at the downtown Cairo As-Safir hotel, it's worth remembering that a previous guest, the Libyan exile Mansour Kikhiya, was last seen there in 1993 while attending a human rights conference; the Americans believe the Egyptian police kidnapped him and sent him back to Libya for execution. The Egyptians, of course, can find no trace of their visitor.

Jordan: The rose-red valley of Petra, the resort of Aqaba, are unbeatable. But you might ask why electoral laws were changed to keep Muslim opponents of the so-called peace process out of parliament, why dozens of political detainees are held after unfair trials at the State Security Court, and why Jordan is hanging more of its citizens (including women) for crimes confessed to under fierce interrogation.

Israel/Palestine: While enjoying Jerusalem, why not ask your Israeli tour guide to point out the Russian Compound where Palestinian prisoners have been brutally tortured and where torture (by "shaking") continues to this day? Ask the Palestinian merchants how many of their families have had their land taken by Israelis for Jewish settlements. Ask to visit the Jerusalem suburb of Givat Shaul and ask the locals what happened there (answer: the Jewish Irgun massacred Arab residents in 1948, when it was called Deir Yassin). If you're staying in the splendid King

David hotel, ask reception who blew it up in 1948 (answer: Menachem Begin, when it was the British military HQ). In Hebron, ask local Palestinians why their forefathers massacred the Jewish inhabitants in the Twenties. And if you visit the nearest Jewish settlement, ask to see the grave of Baruch Goldstein, the Israeli who massacred 29 Palestinians in a Hebron mosque; his grave is now a shrine. In the Palestinian West Bank, you could ask local guides why Arafat pays no attention to his parliament, and why he maintains 14 different secret police forces. And

United Arab Emirates: There is swimming, desert exploration, gambling and lots of money, especially in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. But over a G&T you might ask your Emirates friends how many young Sri Lankan and Filipino women have been viciously flogged for supposedly "illicit" sexual relations in recent years (answer: hundreds). And what happened to the Sri Lankan teenager in the emirate of Ras al-Khaima who was convicted (despite her claim to innocence) of killing the baby she was looking after? (Answer: she was shot by a firing squad just before her 19th birthday.)

ROBERT FISK

When you see the PLO's police stations, ask why so many prisoners are beaten to death by Arafat's thugs. Syria: Ancient Damascus is the most unspoilt of cities; Aleppo's castle is spectacular. Roman Palmyra a joy. But you might ask, gently of course, who are the civilians with guns on so many street corners (answer: members of the various secret police units). Ask the voting pattern of the latest election for the government (be sure we're talking percentages in the high nineties). In Palmyra, glance across towards the hills on the other side of town and ask what the long, low buildings are (answer: Tadmor prison, site of a massacre of inmates by special forces troops in 1982). And while travelling north, if you stop to see the beautiful houses of ancient Hama, you might ask why there are so many bullet holes in them (answer: Syrian troops ruthlessly suppressed an Islamist uprising here; original figures of 20,000 dead may be exaggerated, but it was a bloody business). Syrian officials may say that the rebels of Hama were cutting the throats of families loyal to the government and threatened an Islamic revolution – and that if the uprising had not been crushed, Syria would have become another Algeria. They may well be right – but there's no harm in asking.

Of course, I've left out the non-holiday spots. In Baghdad, you're likely to be invited to visit the torture chamber for a prolonged stay, if you ask about it. In Saudi Arabia, you'll be put on the first plane home if you complain about the regular public decapitation of convicted prisoners on Friday mornings.

Even those old, perennial tourist haunts of Tunisia and Morocco are worthy of a few questions. In both countries, opponents of the rulers regularly "disappear" – in Morocco for up to 30 years; and why, you might ask the waiter in your favourite Tunisian restaurant, does he always seem to be hanging around your table when you talk politics?

Be assured, you will be told everywhere you go that the President/King is both popular and god-like, beloved by his people, ruling benignly under God's heaven. Your tour guide will absolutely insist that this is his own personal conviction. But when you have gone, he will report all this to the authorities, who might – just might – worry that pulling out local fingerprints could reduce the millions they make from tourism.

If you do ask questions, remember, too, that your tour guide will also love his country, and be deeply offended if he thinks you are trying to insult him. But even if you don't ask any questions, why not read Amnesty International's latest human rights report on the country you plan to visit? It never hurts to know where your money is going.

Prayer wheels and apple pie

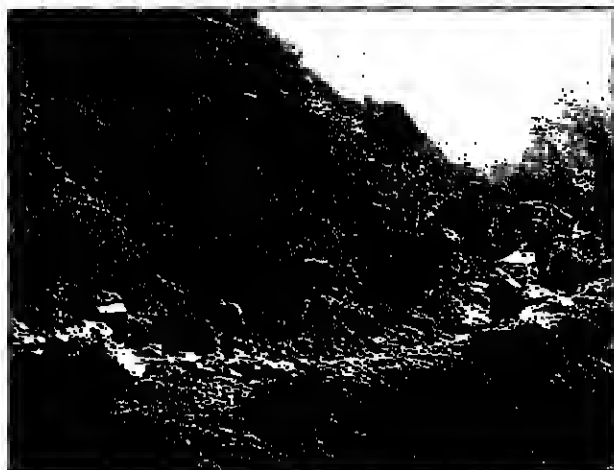
Continued from page 1

in the steaming pools rated almost as highly as the sight of the peaks above us.

From here on, the landscape grew ever more tropical, although the nights held on to their chill. At Ghorepani, we shivered out of bed before dawn to climb Poon Hill, which promised spectacular views across the Himalayas – only to find the mountain panorama obscured by cloud.

A decade ago, visitors were spared half the climb by staying in lodges on the hillside. The resulting deforestation, especially from increased consumption of firewood – persuaded the local environmental body, the Annapurna Conservation Area Project, to move the lodges lower down and encourage owners to install back-boilers or solar panels. Trekkers are also asked to keep water pollution and litter to a minimum.

The last village on the trek was Birethanti, once an isolated community, now a thriving trekking town. The new road from Pokhara to Jomsom has climbed here, extending "civilisation" but gradually smothering a traditional way of life. When it finally reaches Jomsom the rich diversity of the land-



Yaliding on: rush hour on a Nepalese hill path
Photograph: Bruce Coleman

scape, so thrilling on a six-day walk, will flash by in less than a day's drive and the villages in its path may lose most of their tourist trade. Can the ingenuity of the Thakalis once again rise to the challenge?

Getting there
The only airline with direct flights between the UK and Nepal is Royal Nepal (0171-494 0974), but these flights stop at least twice en route. Fares are lower, and stops may be fewer on airlines such

as Qatar Airways via Doha (£515 through Thomas Cook Flights Direct, 0990 101520).

Red tape
Visas are required by all British passport holders. A one-month visa can be obtained on arrival for US\$30-35 (£18-£21, but you must pay in US dollars). To obtain one in advance, send an a/c to the Visa Section, Embassy of Nepal, 12a Kensington Palace Gardens, London W8 4QU (0171-229 1594).

Headless horsemen on the Welsh border



Skirting round the Severn Bore, Matthew Brace continues his series on great short railway journeys by taking the train from Gloucester to Chepstow.

The ticket-collector on the through train from Birmingham to Milford Haven leapt from his carriage at Gloucester with a smile on his face.

"See them?" he asked a colleague waiting on the platform. "There, them two skinnyhead boys walking off now. Got them both at Cheltenham. No ticket, no money, full fine."

He was clearly delighted with busting the two fare-dodgers, who strode away with a story of bravado to tell their mates. So pleased was he with himself that he didn't bother

asking any of us who joined the train at Gloucester for our tickets. Instead he breezed through the carriages whistling and answering queries. Yes, the train did stop at Lydney, but no, he didn't have a timetable to give out.

We pulled out of Gloucester at 13.42, passing through the western suburbs and then across the fertile farmland of the Severn river valley. Steady, brick farmhouses line the route, many built on slight rises in the ground, presumably to give their owners a bit more time to get out the sandbags when the river floods.

Inland, on the edge of the Forest of Dean but sadly out of sight from the train track, is Littledean Hall, reputedly Britain's most haunted house, with far more than its fair share of headless horsemen and white ladies. The house is built on the site of a Roman temple, which may have something to do with the excessive paranormal activity. It is privately owned, but you can visit from April to October.

Ten minutes out of Gloucester, the line meets the north bank of the river as it flows into its estuary at the head of the Bristol Channel. This is where

the Severn Bore is visible at certain times of the year. The Bore, or wave, is a geographical phenomenon that occurs at high tides, producing a wall of water up to a metre (3ft) high which moves upstream at between 16km and 19km an hour (about 11mph). Some fear it, others surf it. At low tide old wooden jetties are visible reaching out from the shore, their struts coated in seaweed and slime.

From Lydney, the first stop, you can take the Heritage Railway. There are special events throughout the year including, for kids, Friends of Thomas and Teddy Bear weekends.

After Lydney the train runs on to Chepstow (Cas-Gwent in Welsh), only another nine minutes down the line. The dramatic approach to this Welsh border town is across a high bridge over the river Wye looking across to Chepstow Castle. Built on a rock above the river, this is the earliest stone castle in Britain which can be accurately dated. The Domesday Book in 1086 records that it was begun by William fitz Osbern, who had taken up his post as the Norman Earl of Hereford by 1069. The fact that the cas-

tle is made of stone rather than earth and timber illustrates its great strategic importance in controlling one of the main crossings into Wales.

The castle is well preserved, with many original features, and there is a small exhibition there that gives you a sense of how tough life was for most people in those days, what with wars, poverty and ever-present plagues. However, for the rich things were different. Royal and noble visitors to the castle would have dined on fine, exotic game. A typical meal for King Edward I, who dropped in in December 1285, included boar's head, heron, cygnet, peacocks, curlew, and iced eggs for pudding.

And what better place for the king and his entourage to walk it all off, than along the battlements? The view is breathtaking. The castle sits on high cliffs above a gentle horseshoe bend of the Wye, which flows idly by 200ft below. The town's position near the confluence of the Wye and the Severn estuary meant that it was always likely to become a key port. Wine from Bordeaux and fish from Iceland were brought ashore here, and the Chartist were deported to Tasmania

from the same dockside in 1840, after their uprising in Newport.

Maybe it is the history of international trade that has always made me see Chepstow as a transitory sort of place. It is on the way to lots of places. I remember it as a fish-and-chip stop, coming home from childhood holidays in South Wales. Today the biggest chippie in town must be Payton's Place, beside the main crossroads, with seating for 60, though the lunch time I dropped in, the other 59 guests were dining elsewhere – maybe at a newly opened fast food joint serving heron and iced eggs to go.

On the footplate
When to go: open all year (nine trains each weekday, 10 on Saturday, seven on Sunday). What to see: Littledean Hall, Chepstow Castle, cheap day return (Gloucester to Chepstow) adult £5.30, children under 15, £2.65. Who to call: Wales and West trains (0345 484950), Talking Timetable for Friends of Thomas and Teddy Bear weekends (01594 843423), Gloucestershire Tourist Board (01452 421188), Chepstow Tourist Board (01222 500200).

48 hours in the life of Marrakesh

هكذا من الأطلال



Hanging out: in Marrakesh, most of your time will be spent exploring the Medina, and here it is easiest to walk through the maze of alleys and markets

Photo: Penny Tweedie/Paros

You need a shortcut to the soul of Morocco's most entertaining city. Jeffrey Lee prescribes the perfect weekend there.

Why go now?
Because February is dry, clear and warm (average 20°C). Because the towering High Atlas mountains provide a snow-capped backdrop to a vibrant, exotic world just three hours away. And because Ramadan is over.

Beam down
British Airways (0345 222111) and Royal Air Maroc (0171-439 4361) fly from Gatwick and Heathrow respectively to Marrakesh. Through discount agents such as Hamilton Travel (0171-344 3344) you can get a fare of around £250-£260 return; booking direct can cost £100 more.

Get your bearings
Marrakesh is in fact two cities side by side. The walled old city, or Medina, is a bustling warren of winding bazaars and medieval buildings, centred around the colourful square of Djama Al-Fna and the towering minaret of the Koutoubiya mosque; the new town, the Nouvelle Ville, is all modern blocks, broad boulevards and French colonial town planning, built around the wide Place de la Liberté. The two city centres are connected by the wide thoroughfare of the Avenue Muhammad Cinq.

The small airport is just a few kilometres away and a taxi to either town centre should cost about 60 dirhams (£4). Make sure you agree a fare in advance. Within Marrakesh, taxis tend to use their meters, and it is very hard for a trip to cost more than about 70 pence.

Most of your time will be spent exploring the Medina, and here it is easiest to walk through the maze of alleys and markets, or travel by horse-drawn carriage. Again, fix a price in advance. From the old city walls to the Djama al-Fna costs about 70 pence. Ignore the "guides" who hassle you as you walk through the Medina. It isn't hard to navigate the bazaars, and if you want to be guided you can hire an official guide through your hotel. For about £10 for a half-day you can get someone who is reliable and knowledgeable, and will keep off the touts.

Check in
There are plenty of cheap hotels around the central Djama al-Fna, the most popular being the Tazi and the Foucauld. I wouldn't recommend any of them. There are plenty of "international" five-stars in the Nouvelle Ville. I wouldn't recommend them, either. My two tips are both close to the centre of the Medina: the Club Med (00 212 4 44 4016) strangely ignored by all the guidebooks I've ever read on Marrakesh, is a haven with idiosyncratic rooms, a great pool and a *hammam* (traditional Moroccan sauna). You don't have to join in kitsch French cabaret, and it's great value at about £30 for a double room; in the fantasy range there is the palatial Mamounia (00 212 4 44 89 81), Winston Churchill's favourite holiday retreat, one of those rare fabled hotels that lives up to its reputation. Opulent and expensive (from about £140

for a double) but for that unforgettable 48 hours.

Take a ride
To get a feel for the place, hire a carriage at the Djama Al-Fna and ride out through the heat and hustle of the Medina to make a half-circuit of the walls. The air is cool in the palm groves around the city and the mud ramparts and towers go pink in the dusty sunlight. Re-enter the walls from the south, beside the mirror-smooth Menara pleasure lake.

Take a hike
Leave the carriage by the forbidden palace of the ruling Sultan Hassan and visit the Al-Badi ("The Incomparable") Palace. Open 9am-12 and 2.30-5.30pm. This is the vast ruin of a 16th-century complex so luxurious that it took the mad Sultan Ismail 10 years to strip out its gold, marble and jewels. Now you can explore the (scary, unlit) dungeons and wander through the echoing courtyards and roofless pavilions where huge white storks nest. Next door, after passing through a narrow tunnel, you'll find the necropolis of the Saadian dynasty. Sealed off and forgotten until the French opened it up in 1917, it is a tranquil place with beautifully tiled and carved tombs.

Lunch on the run
For about £2 a head, the Vevezia, on a terrace overlooking the Koutoubiya mosque, offers a good view, fast, friendly service and local beer. It serves pizzas and local specialties such as couscous and tajine - a stew of meat or vegetables cooked in a conical clay pot with lemons, prunes or olives.

Cultural afternoon
The best place to soak up Marrakesh culture is in the streets and bazaars, but to get a feel of traditional Moroccan arts and crafts, it is worth visiting the Dar Si Said (open 9am-12, 2.30-6pm). This is a sumptuous house, built in the last century for the "simple" brother of a wealthy courier. It now contains a museum of Moroccan arts

(the carpet displays are especially fine).

Window shopping
This is the best reason to come to Marrakesh - to wander the markets or souqs. There is a crowded maze of passages around the Djama Al-Fna, with each trade having its own hazaar. Amidst streams of people you pass through clusters of stalls specialising in slippers, leather, spices, perfumes and metalwork. In one square, you find traditional medicine stalls selling rare roots, dead crows, dried chameleons and other supposedly magical ingredients. In another, all sorts of multi-coloured baskets. Best buys in the souqs are ceramics, silver, woodwork, and, of course, carpets.

There are no prices marked and you must bargain for everything. When bargaining for an expensive item, I recommend an initial offer of about one-tenth the vendor's asking price. Don't be afraid if he oohs and aahs and acts offended. That's all part of the ritual; he will come back with a lower price. Drink the mint tea that is offered (without any obligation to buy) and take your time. You can always go away and come back later. I once bargained with a carpet merchant, on and off, over the whole of a long weekend.

An aperitif
Take a break from the entropy of the old city and drink a pastis, or a local rosé, at one of the relaxed, French-style cafés-terraces in the Nouvelle Ville. Try the Renaissance or the Café Les Négociants.

Demure dinner
In the Nouvelle Ville, the French-run Rôtisserie de la Paix (68 rue Yugoslavie) has a cosy fire for winter and a garden for summer. It does French and Moroccan food for about £8, and specialises in grills. For a blow-out, try Yacout. You will be met by a guide and taken to a spectacular town house in the heart of the Medina for a traditional Moroccan feast (about £25 per head).

Sunday morning: go to church
Non-Muslims are banned from mosques in Morocco, but you can visit the medieval religious schools, or *madrasas*. The most beautiful is the intricately tiled and carved Madrasa Ben Youssef, to the north of the Djama al-Fna. In the same area, you can admire (from the outside) the ornate shrines of two Muslim saints and the glorious Mouassini mosque.

Bracing brunch
The best place is Pergola in the Nouvelle Ville on the south side of Place de la Liberté. For a couple of quid you get a generous Continental or American breakfast in a pleasant pavement setting. At the more basic MikiMaki, on Place Foucauld, they do a reasonable croissant and coffee for 50 pence.

A walk in the park
Marrakesh has a number of public gardens, some of which date back to medieval times, but the two best are private. The Jardin Majorelle is Yves St Laurent's garden in the Nouvelle Ville (entrance £1). Cool and leafy, it is full of flowers, with fountains and courtyards brightly painted to match. In the grounds of the Hotel Mamounia, groves of oranges are crisscrossed by shady formal walkways, lined with silver olives. The paths are draped with bougainvillea and scented with jasmine and lemon blossom.

The icing on the cake
Evening in the Djama Al-Fna is a unique and literally magical experience. Circles of onlookers fill the wide square, where fortune-tellers, faith-healers, conjurers and story-tellers mingle with Berber dancing boys, fire-eaters and snake-charmers. Dozens of food stalls are set up and the spicy smell of sizzling merguez sausages fills the air. Brightly-lit stalls around the square's edge are piled high with nuts, dates and oranges to squeeze right then and there. Take a seat in one of the cafés alongside the throng, order a *café au lait* and watch a medieval world go by.

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GREEN CHANNEL

Sweden's right of public access

Travellers in Sweden benefit from the best access rights anywhere in Europe. The new *Sweden 98* book (available free from the 24-hour request line, 01476 578811) explains the country's tradition of *allmansrätten*.

You are allowed to walk, jog, ride, cycle or ski through the forests and countryside and across other people's land, provided you don't cause any damage to crops, tree plantations or

other vulnerable features of the landscape.

You can pick wild berries, mushrooms and flowers, provided that they are not protected species.

But you are requested not to camp close to houses, and you must ask the landowner for permission to pitch a group of tents, or to stay in one place for any length of time.

Free fishing along Sweden's coasts and archipelagos is allowed only with rod and line.

RED CHANNEL

Warnings about Sweden in the new State Department bulletin

Most crimes involve theft of personal property in public areas, or burglary from cars or residences. However, travellers, especially those who appear affluent, can become targets of pickpockets and bag-snatchers. Hotel breakfast rooms and lobbies, in particular, attract professional, well-dressed thieves who blend in with guests.

The maximum speed limit in Sweden is 110km per hour (65mph). Laws, especially those concerning speeding and driving under the influence of alcohol, are strictly enforced, and fines can be severe.

Penalties for possession, use, or trafficking in illegal drugs in Sweden are high, and convicted offenders can expect jail sentences and fines.

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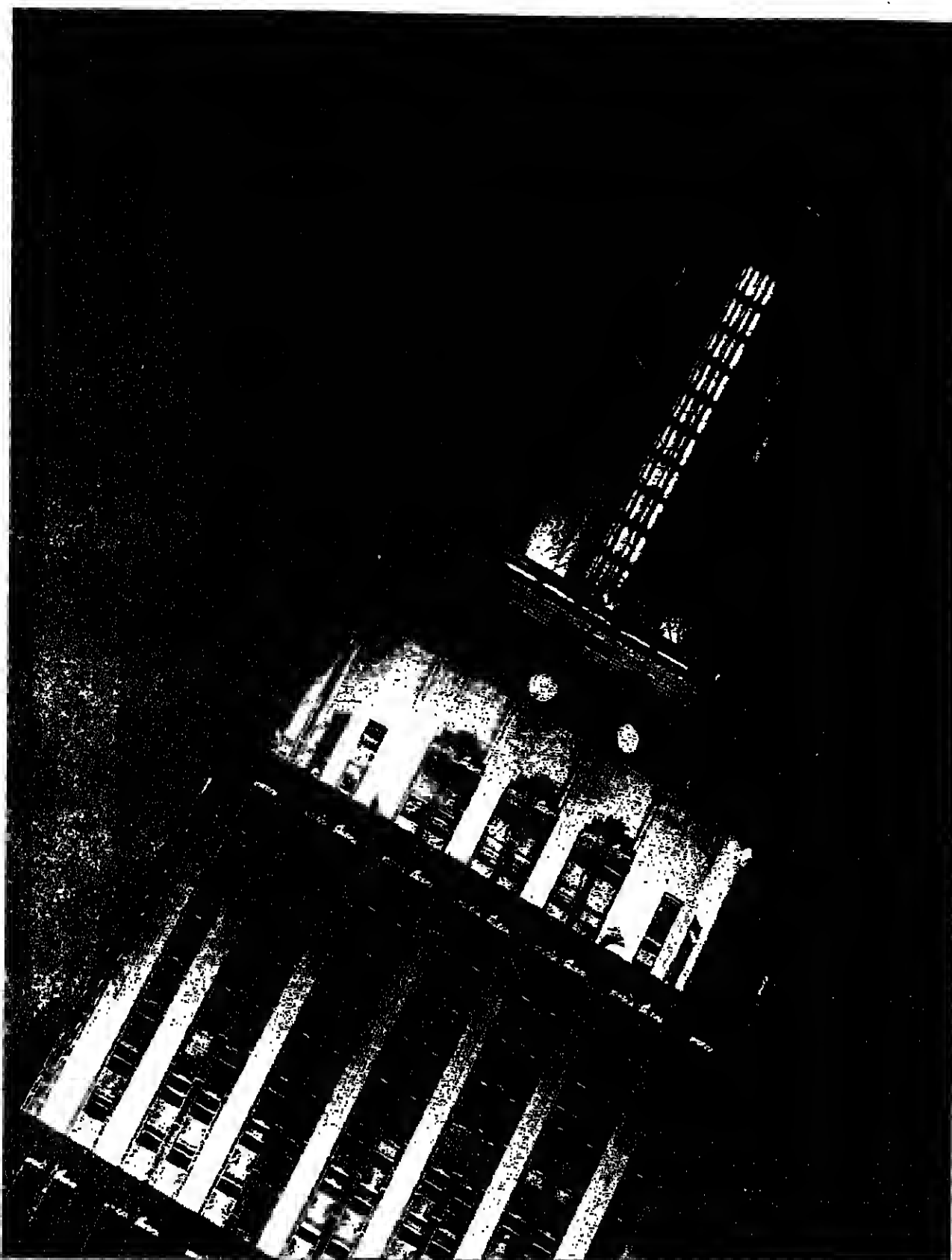
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When you see the ABTA symbol on your tour operator's brochure you can be confident that the descriptions of your travel arrangements comply with our strict guidelines regarding their clarity and accuracy. The same care and attention goes into checking every ABTA travel agent and tour operator's finances. For a leaflet containing the full story on what ABTA offers you, call 0171 307 1991.

LOOK BEFORE YOU BOOK

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4/MARATHON



A race for the upwardly mobile

It's a vertical marathon: every February in New York athletes gather to race up the 86 floors of the world's third tallest building. Martin Holder joined the Empire State Run Up.

New York took my breath away as well as most of my stomach contents. Being violently sick at the top of the "Eighth Wonder of the World" is undoubtedly one of the most memorable things I have done. I wanted my trip to the Big Apple to be unforgettable. So I ran up the Empire State Building instead of using the lift.

Every year 180 upwardly-mobile and perhaps mentally unbalanced athletes take part in the Empire State Run Up. It is the oldest of an ever-growing world-wide circuit of vertical marathons: Sydney, Moscow, Vienna, Munich, Toronto and Detroit all host their own vertical marathons and they are open to anyone keen to achieve something most people are too sensible to do. By running up the world's third tallest building, I wanted to scale new heights of achievement for British athletics, as well as British holiday-makers to New York.

The Empire State Building run takes you up 86 floors - a total of 1,576 40-inch wide, half-inch-high steps. The race begins in the lobby - on 36th Street and Fifth Avenue - and ends on the observatory deck on the 86th floor. My race began three months earlier, up and down the staircase in my home in Blackheath. Practice facilities were rather low on the ground in London, but I did not let the lack of skyscrapers interfere with my training.

Step on it: the Empire State Run Up is the oldest of an ever-growing world-wide circuit of vertical marathons

ing. I ran up and down my 12-step staircase 500 times a day. My neighbours were tolerant. My wife, Fiona, had mentioned in passing something about my suffering from a bladder infection.

I then moved on to a local multi-storey car park, progressing on to the maintenance stairwell of Woolwich Tunnel. I run marathons and have run a few cross-country races - but vertical marathons, I had been told, require work on certain muscle groups. Presumably not the brain.

Raising money for Save The Children and the Catherine Wyatt Fund (set up in memory of a university friend who died suddenly) was my main motivation, as well as going to New York and seeing it from a different perspective - on the run, without the use of yellow cabs or the subway.

Arriving in the city, my training schedule continued with jogs around Central Park, down Broadway and Wall Street, past Macy's and right down to the Statue of Liberty - as well as workouts on the treadmill and step-up machine in the Manhattan Sheraton. I also ran up and down the hotel's 26-storey stairs. On one occasion, guests flooded out of their rooms in my wake thinking that there was a fire drill.

On the big day, I signed in, paid my £10 race fee, collected my singlet and lined up at the start. The pros went first and the race was won for the third successive year by Kurt Konig, a 39-year-old accountant from Mittenwald in Germany. He is the undisputed King of the Maintenance Stairwells. His winning time of 10 minutes 22 seconds was just four seconds outside the all-time record set by Australian Greg Case. The best women's time is around 12-and-a-half minutes. This is held by an Australian, Belinda Soszyn.

I had no idea of what time would be respectable. I just wanted to finish without the aid of paramedics and with blisters that would not prevent me from shopping the next day.

The starting pistol fired and off we went, shoulder-barging each other out of the way in the huge crush, a desperate attempt to get to the small-framed door to the staircase. Then it was stair crazy

all the way. I had expected a nosebleed or a stitch but all I got was sore thumbs from swinging around the handrail from floor to floor. The Empire State Run is essentially a road race with handrails.

Whizzing around the corners, I caught sight of the Manhattan skyline from a 360-degree perspective. It was a curious and novel way of sightseeing. The run is no great distance. Only a fifth of a mile and 1,050ft up. At the end you don't run into the arms of a loved one or trainer, but those of a small man dressed in a rather mangy gorilla suit. Apart from a congratulatory cuddle from King Kong, all you get for your exertions is a not-very-nice complimentary T-shirt, a tiny, tacky trophy, a Swatch, a sticky bun for your blood-sugar level, complimentary rehydration in a wobbly paper cup and an all-expenses ride down to ground level in the lift.

I finished 56th, in a time of just under 16 minutes - 13 minutes faster than the oldest man in the race, 85-year-old Chico Scorsone. The view from the top was more breathtaking than usual. As I gulped for air, and the rest of the runners filed away towards the lift, I looked up to see the man who runs the souvenir shop on the observatory floor shaking his head disconsolately. His name is Douglas. "These stair climbers are my worst customers. They never buy nothing."

I felt terrible, and my recovery period was rather noisy. But slowly the ultimate holiday high began to sink in and make itself felt. I could have gone faster and overtaken more people, but I have been brought up to believe that it is bad luck to cross on stairs.

The 1998 Empire State Run takes place on 22 February; for more information call 001 212 860 4455.

Getting there: London-New York is the busiest and most competitive international air route in the world, and since the start of the year fares have fallen to their lowest ever in real terms. Most of the best deals are on Continental from Gatwick, Heathrow, Birmingham or Manchester for as little as £170 return (including all taxes, through discount agents).

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6/SKIING



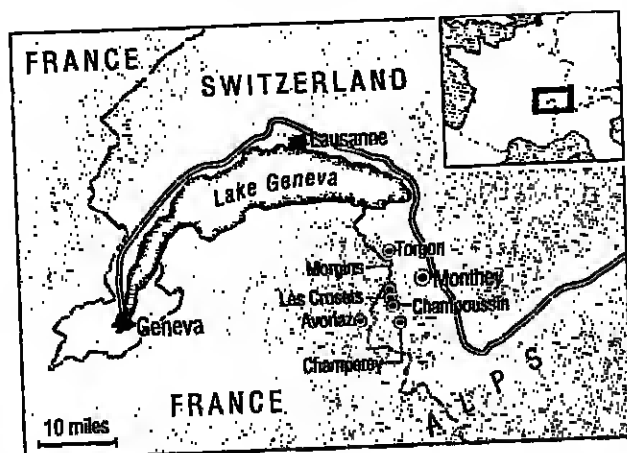
A fanatic's guide: how to fill 24 hours with snow

Only dedicated enthusiasts might consider a day's skiing trip to the Alps. But, writes Richard Haldge, it's not as difficult or as expensive as you may think.

There's nothing worse than a ski bore. God, how they go on. Banging on about black runs and blue runs, ripping up the powder, cruising through the bumps. Then they get on to skiing the relative values of Salomon P Force 9 as compared with Volkl P 30 Race Carvers, and the sheer excitement of slipping into rear-entry boots.

But they are a mere subclass compared with Fanatics. The only time they talk is when they are on a chair lift. In the evenings they are busy sharpening their skis and dulling the conversation. So this is for them: the Ultimate Day Trip.

It works like this: depart London Heathrow at 6.30am (or Manchester at 6.35am), arrive Zurich, take the bus to Engelberg, get your gear, grab the lift pass, ski like a lunatic, get the bus, catch the plane and be back in time for bed. Cost: £160. It's a clever bit of marketing



for us bores and fanatics and will no doubt sell *comme des gâteaux chauds*, particularly as the snow conditions this year are spectacular.

Engelberg is a nice place – it has a revolving cable car, which must be disconcerting for those who tend to suffer from vertigo – but there are other places just as easy to get to for a quick ski. Take the Portes du Soleil. This vast area, with 13 or 14 resorts and infinite kilometres of pistes, straddles France and Switzerland and is as little as an hour and 20 minutes from Geneva.

There's a quartet of Swiss resorts which fit the bill: Champéry, Champoussin, Les

Crosets, Morgins and Torgon. The drive is mostly by motorway – and fast. They all have their qualities. Champéry is pretty, Les Crosets and Champoussin more functional and Morgins slightly more cosmopolitan. Certainly the har next to the chair-lift car serves a very potable house. Pendant, the local wine, in elegant, fluted carafes. Torgon is stuck out on a limb, but links, as they all do, with other resorts. The skiing you see from your front door bears no relation to the huge variety that lies up the lift, over the mountain and down the next valleys.

To get the most skiing on your one-day jaunt, head for

Les Crosets. It links with the neighbouring communes of Champéry and Champoussin and, more important, with the area's biggest ski domain, Avoriaz.

So this is how it goes for bores and fanatics. Take the 8am Swissair flight from Heathrow, arrive Geneva at 10.30am, pray for fast baggage reclaim – better still, keep everything in your hand luggage and leave the skis behind – pick up the hire car, which was booked in advance, and reach Les Crosets by 12.30pm. Pick up the gear from the hire shop in Hôtel de la Télécabine, and you'll be up the cable car and away by 1pm. If you don't make a stop for lunch you can ski solidly until about 4.30pm, including a bracing challenge down the very steep run known as the Chavanettes. Plenty of time to catch the 8pm home.

Frankly, all this is a bit rushed. The fact is that a little lunch in a mountain restaurant is one of the pleasures of life. It seems a shame to whizz past La Crémallière in the Lindbergh area without stopping for its *plat du jour*. All *hlanquette de veau*, *rostit*, *tarte aux myrtilles* and the local red.

There is a solution. Don't just go for the day. Go for 24

hours. And don't just ski in the day. Ski in the night.

Ten kilometres of piste above Les Crosets and Champéry are under floodlight. It means that instead of having to stop skiing when the lifts stop, at about 4.30pm, you can keep going until 10pm. And what's more, the ski pass costs the same.

It is a strange sensation swaying up the mountain on one of the four chair lifts in the dark, and odder still picking your way down the shadowy slopes. In fact, it's a lot easier than the dreaded white-out you get during foggy days,

when you can't see farther than the end of your skis, you've no idea where you are and, unnervingly, you often feel you are moving when in fact you are stationary, up to your knees in deep snow.

There is also something of a party atmosphere to night skiing. A schuss and a few turns from the top find you in Coquoz restaurant. Inside, a central fire blazes away, slightly chilled skiers toast their toes and warm themselves with *vin chaud*, and families tuck in to *crudités* and mountains of *raclette* – melted cheese with boiled potatoes. The more dedicated contem-

plate the impressive wine list, which boasts 35 local wines.

The slide back to the mountain was a particularly carefree affair, and we tumbled into the Hôtel Télécabine in Les Crosets, where a late dinner awaited.

OK, you have to get up at 5.30am to catch the 7.50am flight home, but that's a small price to pay for a bore and a fanatic.

Hôtel de la Télécabine – phone 00 41 24 479 14 21, fax 00 41 024 479 18 66, e-mail: hotel.telecabine@portessusoleil.com – prices for double rooms from £45.

Day trippers: skiers take the chair lift for the slopes above Champéry and Les Crosets

Photographs: Jonathan Anstee

Didn't we have a lovely day ...

What are the options for skiing day trips from Britain? Simon Calder offers some suggestions.

Gatwick airport, last Monday morning, Cathy Packe, one of our skiing writers, was hoping to take off on a £149 day-trip to Chamonix. "Up to six hours skiing in the French Alps", promised Airtours. But she was told in advance that the trip would not be running, and signed up instead for a longer holiday, from which she has yet to return. Yet the cancellation

of the day-trip (and the consequent loss of this week's planned skiing story) was the spur for a survey of the options for one-day skiers. Do you have to be mad, or fantastically rich, or both, to go skiing for the day? The answer turns out to be – neither.

Candidate for the best travel bargain of the year so far is a little-known offer from Manchester or Heathrow for a day

in the Swiss Alps. While Airtours earned lots of publicity for its first venture into one-day skiing, the Switzerland Travel Centre (0171-734 4577) has quietly introduced a day trip that offers six hours' skiing plus scheduled flights to Zurich, transfers to the resort of Engleberg (perfectly respectable, and mercifully close to Zurich airport), ski hire and lift pass – for a total of just £175 from Manchester, £160 from Heathrow. This deal, valid on Saturdays and Sundays, includes travel on Swissair, just

voted best short-haul airline by *Executive Travel* magazine.

Given that the normal air fare for a day trip from Manchester costs £532, I called the airline to check that the story was correct. "Yes, all true," says Richard Castle, Swissair's marketing manager. "We introduced early flights from the UK [6.30am from Heathrow, five minutes later from Manchester] for business travellers. At weekends, we're taking advantage of the lower demand to create a new product for

skiers".

There are other options for the cash-rich, time-poor skier. Richard Haldge, above, describes the 24-hour experience; but if you want to get some skiing in without encroaching on the working day, it helps to aim north.

Those based in south-east England can take advantage of the overnight sleeper from London Euston to Aviemore on Scotrail (0345 550033). Departing at 9.30am gets you there at 7.50am. You can spend the day on the slopes, and the evening sampling the (admittedly limited) apres-ski before climbing aboard the same train at 9.25pm, arriving back in Euston at 7.47am next morning, in time for a day at the office. The fare is a reasonable £99 – with one catch. You have to book this deal a week in advance, which, given the uncertainties of Scottish snow, may not be ideal.

In the other direction the chances look better. The nearest serious Continental snowfields (leaving aside Belgium, favoured by our writer Stephen Wood but sadly few others) are in the Vosges, featured in these pages a fortnight ago. Although it's not the Alps, it's better than the Grampians.

You could, in theory, drive through the night from a French Channel port to the region in around six hours, making it possible to step from car to slope for the day before returning the same evening. With cross-Channel fares by ferry or tunnel so low, this is probably the cheapest option of all – and definitely the most reckless.

Meanwhile, when Cathy Packe returns, she will be pleased to learn that Airtours (01706 232324) is going ahead with a day trip to Chamonix for £149. From Manchester, in

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The precise science of a great sleepover party

Not many people have slept in space. But every month more than 100 children lie in the darkness gazing at the Apollo 10 Command module.

Fiona Macaulay joins Science Night at the Science Museum in London.

The excitement is palpable as children between the ages of eight and 11 arrive for an evening of activities at the Science Museum, after which they bed down in sleeping-bags in three of the main galleries: Space, Power and Shipping. The idea of sleepovers in museums originated in the United States in the Seventies. The Science Museum broke the ground in Britain in 1993 and since then a few others have followed suit, most recently the British Museum.

At the Science Museum, each sleepover night has a theme, such as Stars and Space, or Travel and Journeys. The one I attended was themed on the senses. Children come in groups of between five and 30, with an adult accompanying every five children of the same sex.

When the hordes arrive the first thing they do is set up camp. Boys and girls are separated into "dormitories". On the night of my visit the boys' side was a scrum of sleeping-bags that had been hastily dumped down. The girls, however, laid out pyjamas in neat piles on their pillows, alongside cuddly toys.

Once bivouacked, the children can look round the galleries or participate in the "Science Steps", a series of small, hands-on experiments. They powered a propeller into flight by attaching it to a deflating balloon, and a tin bird was made airborne by an elastic band mechanism.

Then the welcome and safety talk began. This may sound rather dull, but it is in fact where the theatrical

part of the evening starts. We met SAM, the Safety Android Mechanism, dressed in a silver space suit. He spoke to us in a strange sci-fi dialect and warned us that if we did not heed him, "it might result in removal of my powerpack and my being melted down to make a vacuum cleaner".

The next theatrical experience was listening to a scientist, Peter Barham, explain to us about illusions. "Things are not always what they seem."

This was made clear through a series of simple experiments, one of which involved sticking labels on our foreheads and trying to write the word "speed" on them, which resulted in an assortment of strange mirror-writing characters.

An Inspector Clouseau-type character was the star of the next part of the evening, entitled "Solve It!". Dressed in belted raincoat and trilby hat, she stalked amongst the audience to reveal the facts of a crime. We were told that an object had been stolen from the museum and that we must discover what it was, where it had been stolen from and the route that the thief took to escape. The only clues were those provided by a visually impaired witness, Miss Philpot. Using our senses, excluding sight, we tried to decipher the answers from her story.

After taxing our brains in this session we then had to exercise our manual skills to make our own camera obscura. I was completely taken aback to find that this could be achieved with no more than a cardboard tea box, a piece of tracing paper and some Sellotape. During this workshop it was also explained how the eye sees, and the way in which the camera obscura mimics this process.

Theatricals returned for the final event of the evening. The backdrop was the spectacular Flight Gallery, where "birdmen", balloonists and

some of the world's most historic aeroplanes are suspended from the ceiling.

In this darkened, cavernous hall everyone was gathered together for the first time, and the excitement was electric. I wondered how any of these children were ever going to settle down to sleep.

Above us on a raised walkway appeared an actor dressed for arctic conditions as the legendary Clarence Birdseye, pioneer of mass-produced frozen food. He talked about survival techniques at sub-zero temperatures and the Inuit people: "Eskimo means raw-flesh-eater. That's not a very nice name to call someone. They call themselves Inuit, meaning super-race."

Amazingly enough, the children did go to sleep quite quickly after this. Apparently that is not always the case, and the adult contingent can be kept awake till the early hours of the morning.

After breakfast the next morning it was back to the spectacular flight gallery for a quiz trail on the history of flight. This was a good way of starting the day, as there was lots of space to wander round in your own party without bumping into other people. Plenty of time was given to having a good look around and to completing the answers.

Thank goodness for the gentle start (not that the children seemed to be bothered) before our visit to "Launchpad", where we were to be "launched into science". Never have I seen so much frenetic activity so early in the morning as there was in this diverse, hands-on gallery. Bodies struck dramatic poses in the "Shadow Box" when a light flashed, leaving dark shadows against a luminous green background on the screen in the cubicle. This is because the phosphors on the screen store up the energy of light. Others crept along the "Tiptoe Tester" (a vibration detector) or powered by hand



Sleeping exhibition: once a month children aged between eight and 11 spend a night at the Science Museum

Photograph: Richard Kating

a grain pit which lifts the corn by turning an Archimedes screw.

There are so many different things to try at Launchpad that after a three-quarter-hour session the children almost had to be frog-marched out, so reluctant were they to leave. Taking a straw poll amongst the children, this came out as a favourite, along with the mind-twisting "Solve It!" session.

Finally, prize-giving brought everything to a close, with books awarded for the best drawings of the evening and for the winners of a quiz on the night's activities. After this official end to science night, the children were allowed to stay in the museum for the day, with the bonus of free admission to the new Science of Sport exhibition. Relief troops of parents began to arrive to take over their still-energetic charges, and to hear excited chatting about the night's events. I admitted defeat, and went home to bed.

Science Night takes place once a month and costs £20 per child and £18 per adult. For details contact the Science Night Office at the Science Museum on 0171-938 9785.

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The white of spring

There is nothing more cheering, when a searing north-easterly is cutting you in half, than seeing snowdrops, writes Anna Pavord.

In our garden, aconites regularly beat snowdrops for the title of first flower of the year. But aconites have never acquired the same charisma. The Garboesque "I want to be alone" quality brings acolytes flocking in droves around snowdrops during January and February. Invitations to select snowdrop parties are "to die for" as my American friend says, but you're not likely to be asked unless you can recognise 'John Gray' at 30 paces.

In fact, 'John Gray' would be kids' stuff to the real experts. They could pick it out even at 60 paces. It is so handsome, the pedicel (the little, thread-like stem the flower hangs from) is so long and fine, the size and substance of the petals so outstanding, that they would get it at once. I have to admit that, even at one pace, I didn't know it from 'Benhall Beauty' or 'Mighty Atom', both of which, like 'John Gray', are distributed from John Gray's Benhall garden.

I'm used now to the pitying looks that come my way from true snowdrop fanatics. It usually follows the question "But surely, you must grow 'Sibbertoft'?" and my confession that I don't. I've not been brave enough to reveal that the name, let alone the snowdrop itself, is unknown to me.

But I love being in the company of such experts. I love the comforting roll call of names, the gentle nudgings and disputes over correct pedigree. These are the kind of conversations that swirled round my head as a child, when packs of aunts and uncles would endlessly unravel and knit up again the antecedents of our Welsh neighbours. "No. You must mean the Powyses of Ty Hir, not the Powyses of the Neuvad. Now Ralph Powys's great grandmother..." And then they'd be off, and nobody would remember to send me to bed.

So I had a happy time with Dr Ronald Mackenzie, whose Oxfordshire garden contains 70 different kinds of snowdrops. To his patients (he is a GP in a country practice) he may seem a perfectly sane man, but as he himself confesses, "Snowdrop people have got a reputation

for being a bit strange." Well, there are certainly better times of the year to be on your hands and knees in the garden, but this is the only practical way to note the subtle differences in markings that distinguish one named snowdrop cultivar from another.

How did this madness start, I wondered? Even with his medical training, Dr Mackenzie couldn't explain. He was hooked on them even as a child in Yorkshire, he said. In a corner of his garden, he pointed out the clump of *Galanthus elwesii* that he had bought in Woolworths when he was a boy. "Doctors are often keen gardeners. I think it must have something to do with the scientific background. You're used to diagnosing."

His garden is made on a gentle, south-facing slope that stretches up behind his cottage. It is immaculately maintained, mulched all over with mushroom compost, each little outpost of snowdrops set off against an equally riveting clump of hellebores. He likes those, too. And alliums. And daphnes. And iris. And peonies. But one of the reasons he likes snowdrops so much is that they come when they are most needed - there's nothing quite so cheering as seeing flowers such as 'Anglesey Abbey' bravely hanging on to their hats in the teeth of the gale.

Unlike the majority of snowdrops, which have leaves of a bluish-grey, 'Anglesey Abbey' flowers among clumps of bright green foliage, which has the effect of making the flowers seem even more than usually pure. *G. hibernicus* is another strange one, with yellowish rather than green markings on the white petals. "Not quite so good as 'Flavescens'," said Dr Mackenzie judiciously, though like a fond parent, he loves all his snowdrops with a passion. "You know 'Flavescens'? It came to me from Juliet Berkeley at Spetchley. Now her great-aunt was a sister of the famous Edwardian gardener, Ellen Willmott..." And we were off again. All the great snowdrop gardens are related, it seems. A map of who had given what to whom would criss-cross Britain like a demented spider's web.

So what do they need to make them happy, these special snowdrops? If you are paying £5-6 a bulb (more for the really rare ones) you want to know you have done all you can to encourage them. An alkaline soil is better than an acid one, says



Drop-dead gorgeous: Dr Ronald Mackenzie shows off a 'John Gray' snowdrop in his Oxfordshire garden

Photograph: John Lawrence

Dr Mackenzie, and a cool root run better than one that is baked dry. Give them a deep, rich soil in sun or partial shade, but don't plant them in deep shade. When they have clumped up, divide them every three years in February or March. Mulch them in November with leaf mould or mushroom compost. And get some long Johns, so that when they flower, you can enjoy them in comfort.

Snowdrop courses

Dr Mackenzie will be one of the experts talking at the Snowdrop Study Day, to be held on 26 February (11am-3.30pm) at Anglesey Abbey, Lode, Cambridgeshire. His special subject will be propagating snowdrops by bulb scaling. Aaron Davies, who is working on a monograph of snowdrops, will explain the differences between snowdrop species and Richard Ayres, head gardener at the Abbey, will lead a tour of the extensive collection of snowdrops in the garden. Tickets cost £18 (including lunch) and are available from Lavinia Nourse, Dullingham House, Dullingham, Newmarket

CB8 9UP (01638 508186). Cheques should be made out to Cambridge Garden Courses and sent with a stamped, addressed envelope to the above address.

Snowdrop gardens to visit

Hodsock Priory's snowdrop spectacular opens today and runs until 8 March daily (10am-4pm) Admission £2.50. Clearly marked trail through snowdrops, aconites and blue *Anemone blanda*. Hodsock Priory is at Blyth, near Worksop, Nottinghamshire S81 0TY (01909 591204).

The garden at Hatfield House, Hatfield, Hertfordshire is open tomorrow (11am-5pm) for a special snowdrop Sunday. Track them down on the bank behind the pond in the East Garden. Admission £3.10 (01707 262823).

More than 50 different kinds of snowdrop are to be found at Anglesey Abbey, the National Trust's garden at Lode, Cambridgeshire, open over the next three weekends (11am-4pm) Admission £2.50 (01223 811200).

Belton House at Grantham,

Lines (which starred in the recent BBC version of *Tom Jones*) has a special snowdrop opening on Sunday 22 February (11am-3pm) Admission £5 per car (01476 566116).

Snowdrops are scattered through the period gardens of Chirk Castle, Chirk, Clwyd, originally a medieval Marcher fortress. Special openings over the next three weekends (12pm-4pm) Admission £1 (01691 777701).

At Cliveden, Taplow, Maidenhead, Bucks, the head gardener, Philip Cotton, will lead a guided walk, "The Garden in Winter", on 15 February, starting at 11am (01494 522234).

The woodland garden surrounding Lacock Abbey, Lacock, near Chippenham, Wiltshire is carpeted with snowdrops, and there are openings next weekend (14-15 February, 3pm-5pm) and also on 21-22 February (2pm-5pm) Admission £1.80 (01249 730459).

Snowdrop shows Dr Mackenzie will join Rupert Golby in exhibiting some of his snowdrops at the Royal Horticultural

Society's show on 17 February (11am-7pm, admission £5) and 18 February (10am-5pm, admission £3). The show will take place at the RHS Hall, Greycoat Street, Westminster, London SW1.

Snowdrop sales

All snowdrops are best planted "in the green" at the end of March, rather than as dried bulbs in October. Named varieties are available from Avon Bulbs, Burnt House Farm, Mid-Lamhrook, South Petherton, Somerset TA13 5HE (01460 242177; four second-class stamps for catalogue), Louise Vockins at Fongrove Plants, Fongrove, Enborne, near Newbury, Berkshire RG14 6RE (01635 40554; send £1 for catalogue); John Medley, North Green Only, Stoven, Beccles, Suffolk NEAR34 8DG (six first-class stamps for catalogue), or the Snowdrop Company, Barn Cottage, Shilton, Oxfordshire (four second-class stamps for catalogue). If you are a beginner in this game, start with readily available snowdrops such as 'Sam Arnott', 'Atkinsii' and 'Magnet'.

CUTTINGS

There's about a month left for thinking about the garden before we'll be back out there, pottering fast to keep up with the action. But winter is the best time to wander round working out what we need to do to make things work better. Sometimes it's just a matter of adjusting the planting, recognising the fact that there is too much fighting over the same patch for anything to show to advantage. That can be easily put right. More difficult to resolve are the areas where the very shape of the bed, or the angle that a path takes, is uncomfortable. If you need help, turn to *Penelope Hobhouse's Garden Designs* (Frances Lincoln, £25).

Here are designs and planting plans for 23 different sites, not pie-in-the-sky ideas but real plans for real gardens which Mrs Hobhouse has designed over the last couple of years. The prevailing style is formal - particularly well suited to small, town gardens. Her plan for a typical London plot, an Islington patch three times as long as it is wide, is a classic example of how to make the best of awkward proportions. Her planting includes plenty of lush foliage: clipped bay, camellias, viburnum, euphorbia, ferns, hostas, catmint.

The range of situations covered in the book includes a windswept island off the west coast of Scotland, gardens safe for small children (fill the water tank with large pebbles) and gardens designed to be plundered for flowers for the house. The planting schemes are lush and varied, and the book is at the same time practical and dreamy, a rare combination.

On Thursday 19 February, Sybilie Kreutzberger and Pamela Schwerdt, "the girls", as they were generally known when they gardened at Sissinghurst for the redoubtable Vita Sackville-West, will be telling the story of the new garden that they have made since retiring to the Cotswolds (I've seen it, and it is brilliant). This is the third talk in the Winter Lecture Series arranged by the Oxford Botanic Garden, which take place in the Garden Quadrangle Auditorium, St John's College, Oxford and start at 8pm. Tickets (£6) from Louise Allen at the Botanic Garden, Rose Lane, Oxford OX1 4AX (01865 276920).

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School for the starry-eyed

It is a dark and stormy night in West London. A crescent moon bobs between the clouds and a diverse group of men and women gathers to discuss the alignment of the planets. Solly Staples joins them.

Astrology is a subject that bothers people. Even if they scoff at the whole idea, they may furtively scan their newspaper horoscope, haunted by a hunch that just maybe there is something in it after all.

Tonight a lawyer-turned-counselor, a record producer, a New Zealand child-minder and a Rowan Atkinson look-alike are among the dozen men and women sitting round a table listening earnestly to tutor Kim Farley. She fits the bill as an astrologer — a tall, elegant woman with a cascade of curly hair, star-shaped earrings and an outfit in shades of burnt orange. Surely she must be a fire sign.

Kim is all warmth as her protégés step in from the cold, wet street. "Welcome back, my lovelies. Missed you all." It promises to be a somewhat stagey evening, but within minutes Kim has everyone's attention and is setting her students little tasks to help them to recap what they learnt in their last session.

As the evening progresses, she switches from a cosy and almost patronising approach to one of extraordinary fluency, rapidly dealing with a mass of seemingly complex theories and mathematical phenomena. She is indeed inspirational. It is not hard to see how some of the class's sceptics have been won over to the wonders of astrology.

Kim herself is not interested in persuading people to believe, but rather in expounding the theories and explaining interpretations.

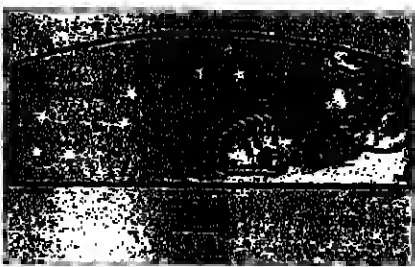
"I started on a course just like this in 1989," she says. "I saw what it offered, and spent six years getting my diploma. Now I am a member of the Faculty of Astrological Studies. For me astrology is about what things mean — not predicting what is going to happen."

"I enjoy getting people to think about it. Yes, I do sometimes skim through

newspaper horoscopes, but when you reduce a complex issue to a few lines it makes it all very banal. The skill of newspaper astrologers is in the writing, more than anything else; unfortunately, real astrologers don't make that sort of money."

The 20-week course, run by Kensington and Chelsea College for Adult Education, is open to complete beginners or those who have already dabbled in aspects of the planets and elements. The introduction deals with the astrological alphabet relating to planets, elements and what are called modes: cardinality, fixity and mutability.

Kim starts this evening's two-hour session by inviting everyone to imagine a circus, and then to relate different circus acts



to each sign of the zodiac — based on knowledge gleaned about the signs from earlier sessions.

This is good fun, if a little basic. The untutored would guess that a fire-eater might correspond to the fire sign of Aries, or that Siamese twins could be represented by Gemini, but the more expert come up with intriguing options. The sign of Taurus was associated with elephants and other animal acts but also with meticulous financial business, and would therefore be most likely to represent the cashier or ticket collector, or even the financial backer of the circus. High-wire acts were associated with Libra, psychic mind-reading and snake-charming with Scorpio, sad clowns with Capricorn, and dog acts with Virgo. And so it went on.

The next exercise dealt with the 10 basic "planets": Sun, Moon, Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto. This time Kim asked the class to imagine a brick wall and how the spirit of each planet might react to it. Well, that got

them going. A random vox pop suggested that Venus would have a smooch under it, Mars might have a quick one up against it, and Pluto would be more into putting black-tinted mirrors on it.

Not that every reference was about sex. Saturn would build a scaffold around the wall. Neptune might dance to music beside it, and Mercury might play games against it.

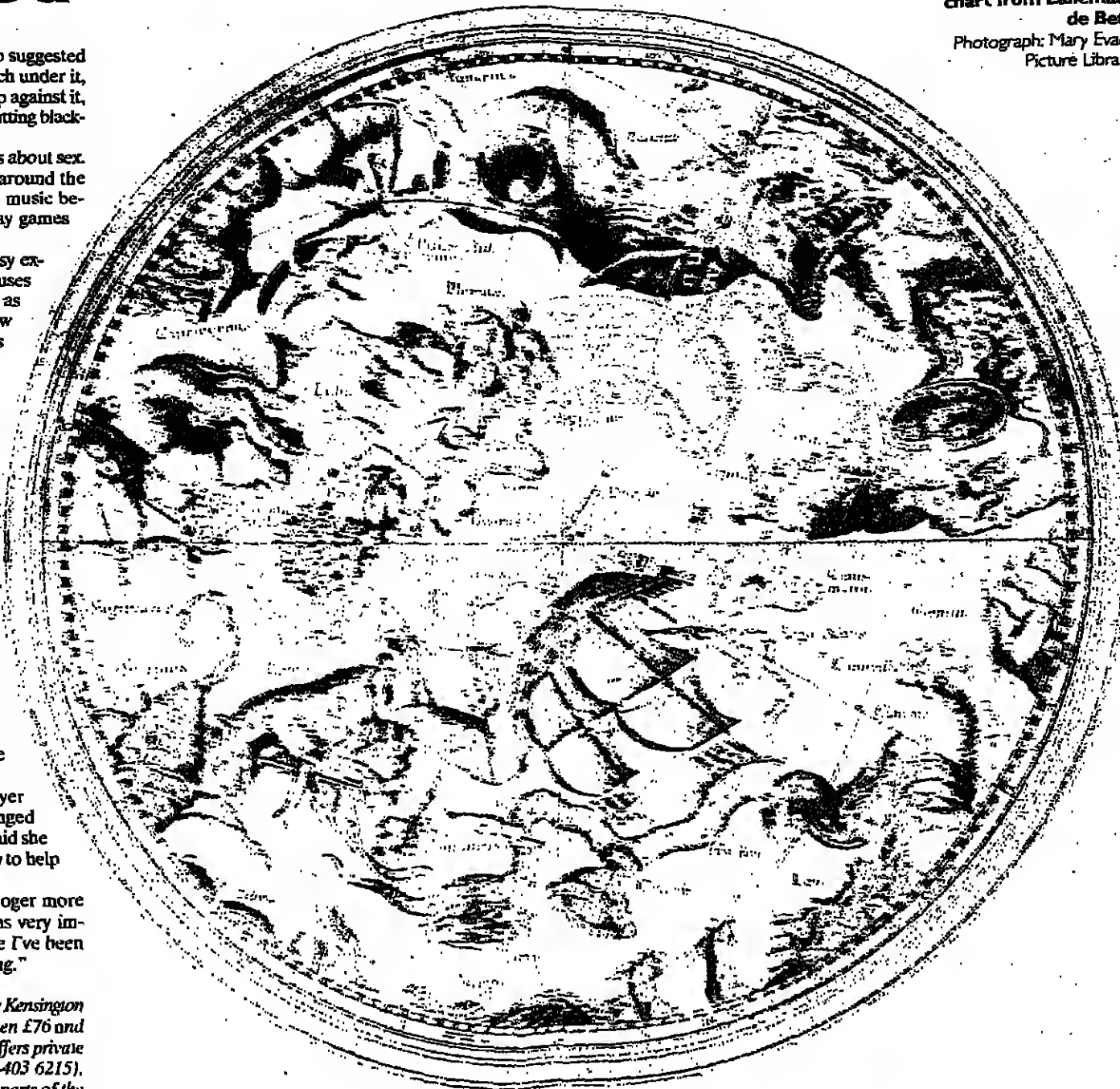
When Kim switched the easy exercises to describing the 12 houses in astrology, the novice — such as me — was lost, but I could see how entranced the rest of the class remained. They had all done their own chart and had studied the charts of some celebrities, including Judy Garland and Germaine Greer, to get a feeling of how to interpret a wide range of information offered by the circumstances, place and time of the subject's birth.

Dare Mason, a record producer, said that he had been sceptical, but was moved to give the course a go because he had met several astrologers and had been impressed with what they said. "I was just amazed at how accurate my chart was. What I am learning now is the complexity of interpretation."

Lindsay, an erstwhile lawyer from London who had changed her profession to counselling, said she used her knowledge of astrology to help assess her clients.

"I have consulted an astrologer more than once, and each time I was very impressed. This is the first course I've been on, and I've found it fascinating."

Kim Farley's 20-week course at the Kensington and Chelsea College costs between £76 and £92 (0171-573 5333). She also offers private consultations in London (0171-403 6215). Information on courses in other parts of the country can be obtained from the Faculty of Astrological Studies in Orpington, Kent (07000 790143).



Heavens above: sky chart from Lallemand de Betz
Photograph: Mary Evans Picture Library

GAMES

WHAT TO PLAY ON COLD WINTER EVENINGS CHRIS MASLANKA

Winter is a stressful time. The cold weather may throw families together on their own resources for a protracted period of unstructured time. What can be done to find the disparate group together? What means can be found to pass the time less painfully? In the old days we played party games. Now we are so out of touch with our creativity and have so little leisure time that games and pastimes have to be expensively packaged for us. Choosing the wrong sort of game can be more distressing than de-stressing. The trick is to match the game to the company. Is the game for adults only, or could children be included? Is it a strategy game for two, or a rip-roaring team game? Is it a game of skill or of chance? Could it lead to board rage?

Games of knowledge and skill, for example, are often riskier with relative strangers than games of chance, especially if one of the players is too competitive. There always seems to be an Uncle Eno figure, who, mistaking *Trivial Pursuit* for a game of knowledge, has memorised all the answers. The compendiousness of his knowledge in this very narrow range makes him feel good, but it ruins the game for the rest of us.

Because of the element of randomness involved, the Uncle Eno strategy is doomed with *My First Animal Memory Game* (2-8 players, 3+ years, Ravensburger, RRP £6.99) in which you shuffle paired cards and place them face down on the table. Players take it in turns to turn over pairs in an attempt

to find a matching pair. If they don't the cards are replaced face down. The aim is to build up a picture and remember what is where. The photos (as you'd expect) are much more realistic than the usual artist's impressions, which helps when the aim is also to familiarise you with animals. Harry (3½) and Sarah (4) played it together quite contentedly while Lucy (2½) enjoyed simply pairing up their cards on her own. Could this game help restore the concentration and attention span so undermined by children's television? (Rating: f, v)

Siacrobats (Balancing skill for 1-4 players, 5+ years to adult, Ravensburger, RRP £6.99). Players are allocated a lot of plastic acrobats to pile on a pylon without its overbalancing. The formation gets increasingly rickety as the game proceeds. Sue (37) looks forward to playing it without the help of Sarah (3) who took too much delight in the structural collapse occasioned by her as yet unperfected balancing skills. I thought it might also be a good way to test hand-steadiness in surgeons or in drinkers (the tippler's topple-test). (Rating: f, v)

In *Uno Slam* (Card game, 2-6 players aged 7+, Spear's, RRP £15; batteries not included) players match cards by number and colour in a race against time. The hectic can be varied by adjusting the electronic timer. The attraction for children is the excitement, but I look forward to using it to demonstrate how even a little alcohol slows reaction times. (Rating: ff, v)

The aim in *Pocket Money* (Board game for two to four players aged 6+, Jumbo Games, £14.99) is to save £15 towards buying a hike while huying an item from each of four shops. Once I got over the uncharitable thought that you could save as much in real money by not buying the game at all, I found it easy to follow. The children enjoyed it while exercising their money-handling skills. Such misery is caused to people by not having been taught proper money-skills that I welcome this game. Indeed I look forward to an adult version to help you acquire through non-threatening play the necessary skills to juggle PAYE, VAT and tax self-assessment. (Rating: f, v)

If the real world is too harsh for young innocents, there's always *Enchanted Forest* (two to six players, Ravensburger, age 6+, for two to six players, RRP £9.99), a quiet, thoughtful game children can play alone or with adults. The artwork is solid and attractive and the instructions are easy to follow. You have to travel through the forest finding three treasures asked for. Girls may enjoy this more than boys — it's fairy-tale stuff: more for Walter than Dennis the Menace. (Rating: p, Z)

Game of Knowledge (University Games, Kids International, about £22.99) is billed as "the educational game for children and their parents" and has a lot to commend it. It enables parents to participate in their children's education as well as facilitating learning through play. Each card has a question for a 10-15-year-old and one for an over-16. This levelling makes

it fairer for children to play it with their parents. The questions deal with factual information from everyday life (questions on nature, media, our world, sports, science) rather than with trivia — and yet all of us who played it enjoyed it. (Rating: f, v)

X is for the Unexplained (two to six players aged 14+, Lagoon Games, RRP £9.99) is a board game based on paranormal trivia. But it's not just for *X-Files* enthusiasts. I derived far more pleasure from scoffing at the "facts" and tall stories than any sci-fi addict could possibly get from believing in them. Unfortunately this shawraggi sticks in the mind like a hurr. How will I ever forget that Kenji Urada met his death in 1981 in a Japanese factory when a robot mistook his head for a component that needed tightening? (Rating: p, Z)

I enjoyed *Brain Strain* (two or more players in teams, Lagoon, RRP £19.99), but then I would, wouldn't I? Lateral puzzles may not be watertight as puzzles, but as they involve creative thinking, finagling and the misleading use of words they are good for breaking the ice at parties. How many animals of each species did Moses take on the Ark? Answer: None, it was Noah. Unfair, you cry. But so is life. All the Funfair of the unfair! (Rating: f, v)

Rating key: p = quiet, f = noisy, ff = very noisy.
Game rage risk: Z = almost irritatingly inoffensive, v = tread carefully, vv = have a friendly Relate counsellor on hand.
Chris Maslanka's survey will conclude next week.

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Lenny Beige, 48, show-business legend

As a multi-faceted Lothario, I don't have much leisure time, but I like to relax by playing a little mah-jong with my mother at her Bide-a-Wee-Wyle Home and Funeral Co-operative in Temple Fortune. That and Yhatree, a dice game which I use to humour her more than anything else; these days she has no idea of what's going on.

My favourite game is backgammon. I play with Omar Sharif — when we haven't time for a rubber of bridge — when I'm on tour in the Middle East or he's over here. It's quick, it's easy and it's very stylish, particularly if you have a monogrammed doe-skin case.

When we go over to Bruce Forsyth's house on Boxing Day, we play pool-sticks with cigar butts in his swimming pool. My Monte Cristo No 2 beats his slim panacilla every time, and Ernie Wise still insists on using a cocktail Sobranie, which sinks without trace.

I've always got time for a game on my satin Twister duvet cover, and if I'm supine with a young lady, I'll suggest that we get the Mazola out. Obviously I don't use anything cheap like Crisp 'n' Dry.

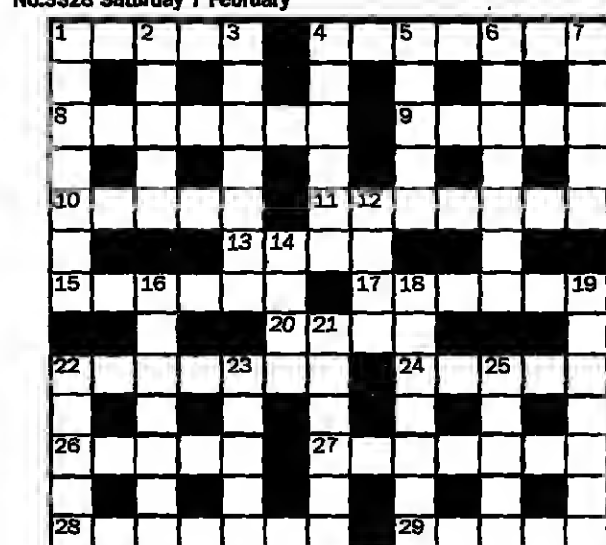
There's very little that I haven't done, but if anything were possible, I wouldn't mind playing ping-pong with Sammy Davis Jr. He's been an inspiration to me. He's dead, unfortunately, so it won't happen. I like ping-pong because you don't have to move. Jews don't like to run about too much; they're not manual workers.

I used to play a game with my brothers. It was called "I'm the star, you're the agent and he's the publicist." I was only five at the time. Funnily enough my twin brother is still my agent. My older brother is sadly no longer with us. He used to be my agent.

You are too late to see Lenny Beige's acclaimed performance at last year's Edinburgh Festival, but may still catch him at the Regency Rooms at the Talk of London in Drury Lane. Information from the Box Office: 0171-483 2157.

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No. 3528 Saturday 7 February



ACROSS

- 1 Production quantity (5)
- 4 Refrigerated cabinet (7)
- 8 Measure of sound (7)
- 9 Short poem (5)
- 10 Musical group (5)
- 11 Short-range photo (5-2)
- 13 S African plant (4)
- 15 Powerful (6)
- 17 Former Scottish county (6)
- 20 Unclothed figure (4)
- 22 Excuse (7)
- 24 Bolivian city (2,3)
- 26 Joint (5)
- 27 Give reasons for (7)
- 28 OT book (7)
- 29 Wear away (5)

DOWN

- 1 Not the done thing (3,4)
- 2 Unspoken (5)
- 3 Natural home (7)
- 4 Type of cloth (6)
- 5 Snow house (5)
- 6 Theft (7)
- 7 Go over main points (5)
- 12 Heavy metal (4)
- 14 Keen-sighted animal (4)
- 16 Small cucumber (7)
- 18 Become ill again (7)
- 19 Medicated tablet (7)
- 21 Speaks (6)
- 22 Crash (5)
- 23 50-50 chances (5)
- 25 Keyboard instrument (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Eye, 2 Sacks (ice-axe), 3 Cavalry, 8 Noon, 9 Lost property, 10 Instep, 12 Ceylon, 14 User-friendly, 18 Lima, 19 Rehearse, 20 Spoil, 21 Key, DOWN: 1 Echelon, 2 Eaves, 3 Say-so, 4 Canary, 5 Slout, 6 Slip-up, 11 Tornado, 12 Croche, 13 Odyssey, 15 Ships, 16 Rural, 17 Drank.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Love all: dealer East	
North	East
♠ 10 3	♠ 8 4
♥ A Q 8 7 2	♥ 6
♦ K 4	♦ Q J 7 6 5 3
♣ K J 6 4	♣ 10 9 7 3
West	South
♠ K Q 6	♠ A J 9 7 5 2
♥ K J 10 5 4 3	♥ 9
♦ 10 9 8 2	♦ A
♣ none	♣ A Q 8 5 2

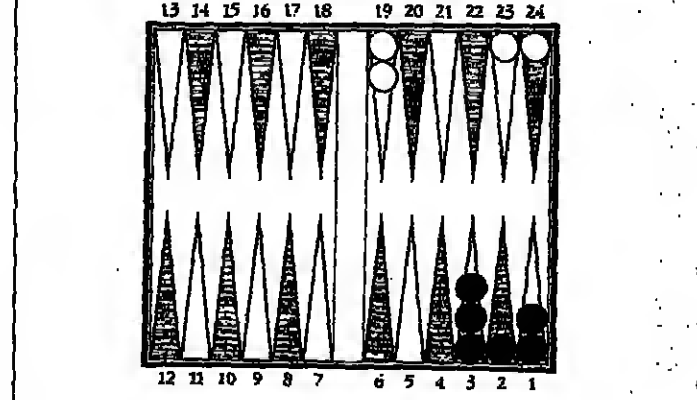
This proved an excellent hand for the technicians when it came up in the recent Macallan Pairs. As you can imagine, there was a wide variety of results: Four Spades played comfortably for an overtrick; the eventual winners (Helgemo and Helness of Norway) were allowed to play the East-West cards in Three Diamonds doubled for a cheap escape; but the real interest came when South became declarer in Six Clubs after West had overcalled in hearts.

Now Six Clubs looks relatively easy if you can see only the North-South cards, but the irritating 4-4 trump break set problems which not all declarers managed to solve. For example, one distinguished declarer won the diamond lead and laid down the ace of clubs. Now he could not recover, he had to lose a spade and, to establish the suit, dummy had to ruff. Now East was bound to score a trump trick to defeat the contract.

Alfredo Versace (playing with Lorenzo Lauria, last year's Italian winners) was more alert to the possible dangers. He won the diamond lead and played a trump to the king to discover the bad break. He led a second trump through East, who followed with the nine, then continued with the ace and another spade.

Now a spade could be ruffed high with dummy's ♠J, establishing the suit, and the marked trump finesse taken against East's ten.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



This was the first problem in our Christmas quiz. Should Black redouble, and if he does, should White take or drop?

How does one go about evaluating positions like this? Racing counts are no good and the Thorpe Count is unreliable for such a small number of men on the board. A combination of reference positions and deduction is the method to use. First we notice that Black will be off in three rolls or fewer unless he rolls a number containing a two followed immediately by another two. Double three or better will save him a roll and win the game unless White rolls double six. We know that a pure three-roll position (each side has six men and cannot miss during the bear-off) is a double and a narrow pass. Is White better or worse than a pure three-roll position?

If Black does not roll one of his four best doubles then White has six great numbers: 66 — which wins immediately — 55, 44, 33, 65 and 56). These numbers leave Black requiring a double next time. This variation happens 32/36 x 6/36 = 12.3 per cent of the time. If White does not roll one of his best numbers then most of the time he will be left with three or four men against four of Black's men. In a pure two-roll position White will win 14 per cent of the time. Thus he will win this variation 32/36 x 14 = 12.4 per cent. So far we have White winning 24.7 per cent, not quite the 25 per cent required to take.

But he can do no better. We have given White the benefit in our assumptions so far and also ignored the fact that Black may roll a winning double on his second roll. Exact calculation shows that White will lose two points if he drops the redouble but 2.17 points if he takes. Thus the answer is (a) redouble (b) drop.

Christmas quiz results: The copy of *Backgammon* by Paul Magriel is on its way to Martin and Theresa Hughes from Jersey. Barry McAdam (Ealing) and Graham Titcombe (Kingston-upon-Thames) win *Backgammon for Winners* by Bill Robertie.

مكتبة من الأدب

Putting the horse before the car

Learning to ride isn't easy, at least for adults. It's a psychological game of control, mostly with yourself - but the horse has some input too, writes Eric Kendall.

The wind's in your hair, in the horse's mane, and in his tail if you dare to look round. Man and beast are synched, rather than synchronised, in a sort of lumpy trot which is about as fast as you'll go on your first time out.

Harlequin - a very large cart horse, to the untutored eye - is a reassuring first ride, to whom the concept of galloping is as distant as it is to me. Designed for pulling ploughs rather than carrying people, he cultivates the agricultural look by wearing his hair long at the ankles. He's ideal for a steady ride as long as speed isn't on the agenda. Despite his enormous height, his proportionate breadth makes sitting on him a bit like being on an elephant, in terms of the secure feel of his huge back. But it's a long way down, whether measured in hands, feet, or fractions of a furlong.

Half the battle when learning how to ride is keeping your nerve and maintaining a big presence - not letting the horse know you might be scared. There's also the question of balance. You think you've got it, and then some smart Alec tells you to trot on a horse without a saddle and with your arms in the air, at which point you discover that your head is heavier than your bottom, your feet and your boots combined. To make any progress, hours on horseback need to be clocked up in pursuit of the rider's Holy Grail: a good seat.

Well before that stage, certain movements become second nature - being pulled briskly down the neck of the animal whenever it gets within range of ground-level greenery, and jiggling along at a trot before anyone's explained how to "rise". And you don't need an A-level in equine science

to recognise the rearing head, bared teeth and laid-back ears of a cross horse that's been run into once too often by one of its stablemates - it can only mean trouble, especially if your "scar" still eludes you.

Other than rearing and bucking, the bolt is the main thing to lose sleep over. It's a swift and unstoppable progression through the gears from zero to flat out, and is the most telling moment in a would-be rider's career. You discover how fast a horse can go when it really wants to, rather than when you're asking it to. There is a difference.

You don't have to be interested in fox-hunting or polo to want to ride. For many, it's the sensation of speed and a power that's almost part of you, experienced in deep, quiet countryside - a bucolic adrenaline kick. There's also the practical side, even in this age: horses as transport, particularly in areas where it's hard on foot and impossible in a vehicle. The logical, adventurous extension of this is to reach Britain's and the rest of the world's unspoilt corners on horseback before someone arrives with the Tarmac. Even areas that do have Jeep or car access can be infinitely better seen from the saddle - on a horseback safari you gallop with the herd of zebra, rather than watching them from a minibus through a telephoto lens.

Learning to ride

The British Horse Society (01203 414118) approves and monitors riding schools throughout the country. Contact them for details of approved local schools. A good alternative to "normal" country riding is on the coast. Long beaches offer potential gallops on miles of hard-packed sand: Pakefield Riding School, Suffolk (01502 572257); Rose Acre Riding School, Norfolk (01263 720671); Trenance Riding School, Cornwall (01637 872699); Clyn Du Ridding Centre, Wales (01554 832546).

A number of companies offer riding holidays all over the world. Most

cater to experienced riders; on safari, "you must be able to gallop out of trouble". Other, more mountainous areas need less riding experience, as the altitude and terrain restricts any potential for equine high jinks, and the likelihood of coming across threatening wild animals is remote. Ride World Wide (0171 735 1144) includes opportunities for expert and novice without just mixing them together in a big group (sometimes a problem on large US dude ranches). Their trip to the Chilean Andes (where endurance is the key, with four to six hours a day in the saddle) has been enjoyed by riders with as little as four months' riding experience.

Kit

One of the most appealing aspects of riding abroad is dressing up in real cowboy gear. Likewise, the typical

Riding the waves: coast riding offers potential gallops on miles of hard-packed sand
Photograph: Perry Kendall

British outfit must be responsible for more people not taking up riding than any other factor, though the latest generation of helmets should further reduce the risk of head injury in a fall or, more amusingly, during low-branch encounters.

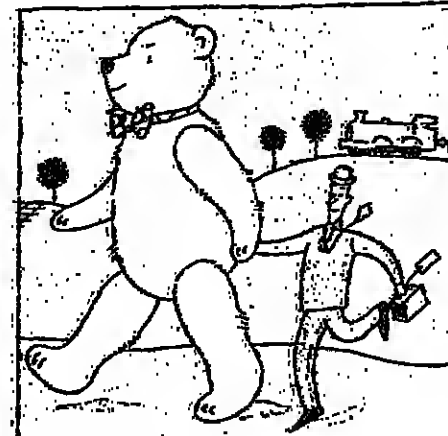
The idea of jodhpurs is that the seams are in the right, non-chafing places. Their figure-hugging aspect also ensures that folds of material can't tuck up between you and the horse. Jeans will rub the insides of your legs but will do initially; gloves are useful. Most vital is a pair of boots that won't easily allow your foot to slip through the stirrup (they should have a heel).

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The service road outside Tokyo's Narita Airport was empty. Gesturing to us to wait on the pavement, the policeman took a whistle from his belt and blew it. He then gestured to us to cross the service road. It was an interesting introduction to Japan.

On the bus ride into Nagano, where we members of the Fourth Estate were to report on the XVIII Winter Olympics, our young guide did what he could to divert our attention from the tedium of the journey.

"We are going through the centre of Tokyo now so you will see lots of buildings. Thank you."

There were indeed many buildings to be seen on our slow progress along the freeway which cuts through the city at seventh floor level. Had they been trees, the slimmer of the

densely packed tower blocks around us would have withered away through lack of sunlight.

It had taken us almost two hours to reach Tokyo from the airport. As we crossed over a railway line, the hullet train to Nagano passed right underneath us, its beak-like front section cleaving the air.

"The Shinkansen is going underneath us now. The Shinkansen is the fastest train in Japan."

A little ironic groan went through the bus as a few of us shifted on seats that were just a fraction too narrow for the human back.

"We will be going for six hours," our guide went on. "It may be more. So you can do whatever you want."

The range of possibilities appeared limited.

"Sleep or chat or whatever you want. But please don't

stretch your arms out of the windows because this is very dangerous."

Located six hours later in my little room with a view over the cement factory, I detected a similar tone in a sheet of instructions regarding correct usage of my furniture.

There was apparently a possibility that moulds and bacteria might grow behind the furniture if it were situated too close to the wall. A minimum distance of 10 centimetres was recommended. I made a mental note to check that statistic at an appropriate time.

"Do not stand or jump on the furniture," the instruction went on. "You could lose your balance, fall and be injured. These acts may also shorten the life of the furniture."

By way of illustration, two erring stick men were pictured, half obliterated by large cross-

es. The first was falling backwards off a chair from a standing position, a book flying out of his hand. The second, unaccountably, was hanging from the top of his opened wardrobe door with both hands. No clue was given as to what might have moved him to such an act of desperation.

I had not realised that a simple desk, chair and wardrobe could harbour such peril.

Was this unnerving awareness, a national trait, I wondered, or merely a local peculiarity? Whatever, it was an interesting introduction to my Olympic lodgings.

The concrete factory, in its way, said a lot about the coexistence of the Olympics and this sprawling, low-rise, industrialised town, trapped in its own net of telephone wires.

A blue Olympic symbol, complete with the inevitable

sponsor's name, has simply been attached to the highest convenient vantage point - which happens to be this factory's central tower.

But if that juxtaposition appears odd, there are other anomalies about these Games that are even harder to take in. One of the stated aims of the Nagano Olympics is "to pay homage to nature."

Accordingly, there has been much attention given to environmental issues.

A small forest, natural habitat to several rare birds, has been painstakingly transplanted from the biathlon course.

The downhill skiing course at Hakuba has also been shaped by environmental pressures. Its length has been curtailed by the need to safeguard national park land at the top of the mountain. And its first big jump has been specially con-

structed to ensure racers fly well over a section where rare alpine flowers grow. Graham Bell, Britain's veteran downhill skier, likened the experience to jumping off a garage roof.

Yet this is a town where traffic pollution is so bad that many of the inhabitants walk the streets with face masks on. Outside the main Olympic village, another logo depicting five rings is on display in front of a factory issuing yellow smoke into the air from two stacks.

Among those trying to take in the more opaque Japanese customs this week was the minister for sport, Tony Banks. He was, he said, looking forward to seeing the downhill skier, although he was happy to acknowledge that his native landscape in West Ham had not prepared him for anything like the Hakuba. Not unless one counted the dry skiing facilities

at Beckton - "the Beckton Alps" - as he had it.

Later in the week, the minister plans to try to fathom the mysteries of curling. That should provide him with another mountain to climb.

Wandering through Nagano town centre on the way to the function at which the Minister appeared, I had become aware of an elderly Japanese gentleman in a baseball cap closing in on me with intense benevolence.

"Where you from?" he asked, smiling alarmingly.

"From England."

"England?"

"Yes."

"Diana," he said.

"Diana?"

"Diana. Yes. Diana. She

dead."

He was still grinning. I

smiled, and quickened my step.

It was an interesting introduction to Japanese conversation.

Monster of the slopes aims to join the giants

A former bricklayer who was dumped from ski school is poised to put Austria back on the summit of Olympic alpine racing.

Mike Rowbottom reports from Nagano, Japan, on the fall and rise of the gravity-defying Hermann Maier.

There has been much earnest discussion this week about the quality of the snow here. Unlike the powdery snow on which the Europeans race, it is wet - the

reason being that these mountains in the heartland of Japan form a natural battleground for the warm air coming in from the Pacific, and the cold Siberian air from the opposite direction.

Result: snow which makes ski racing unpredictable. Germany's Karja Seizinger summarised the fears of competitors when she described the courses as "a lottery".

So when the most startling new talent in the sport, Hermann Maier, arrived for the winter Games, there was one very obvious question to ask.

"Hermann, what do you make of the snow in Nagano?"

"Well," the Austrian replied,

"It's just as white as it is in Flachau." And the mighty shoulders which have powered him into a virtually unassailable position in the World Cup standings shook with laughter.

The nicknames which this bear of a man has been given - "Monster", "The Herminator" - are pointers to the awe in which he has come to be regarded in the world of skiing.

This season he is poised to become the first Austrian to win the overall World Cup title since Karl Schranz in 1969, having won 11 events so far in downhill, giant slalom, super-giant slalom races and combined.

That kind of performance, across that range of disciplines, puts him in the company of the greats. Graham Bell, Britain's five-times Olympic skier, likens what Maier is doing this season to the performances of Jean-Claude Killy, Ingemar Stenmark and Alberto Tomba. "But they were doing it in their prime," he said. "And Maier is doing it from nowhere."

The circumstances of the Austrian's fall and rise are the stuff of comic books - a ski version of Alf Tupper, "Tough of the Alps", in *The Hotspur*.

After being dropped from the Austrian national ski pro-



Mountain man: Austria's Hermann Maier launches himself down the Hakuba piste during practice for tomorrow's downhill

Photograph: AP

gramme at the age of 15 because of a knee injury, he became a bricklayer, while working as a part-time ski instructor on the slopes of his native Flachau.

Years of slapping mortar and carrying bricks transformed the undersized teenager. He is under six foot tall, but to his opponents he appears almost six feet wide. "It turned out to be good training," he said.

The opportunity to return to the top of the mountain arrived in his hometown. As a man who was well acquainted with the slopes, he was asked by the race organisers to become a fore-runner, a volunteer job which entails skiing the course before

the competitors to remove loose snow.

Maier was well aware that all the leading Austrian officials would be watching; so he took an audacious risk. Like an athlete's pacemaker with ideas above his station, Maier shifted himself down the mountain with the abandon which has characterised all his racing. The result is now the stuff of legend.

"It was a lot of pressure, that's for sure," Maier said at the time. "I knew it was the last chance for me to make something happen in my career. But when I left the starting gate, I wasn't thinking of the pressure. I just wanted to ski well, and to have fun. I went for it."

And it went for him - he ended the day 12th fastest and was soon being sent to compete on the 1996 European Cup circuit, which he won. He registered his first victory in a World Cup event at Garmisch early in 1997 and his first full World Cup season has been stunningly productive.

He has been the leading figure in a huge Austrian revival this season - in the world rankings, they provide seven of the top 10 male skiers. But unlike his colleagues, Maier's success does not have its roots in the hyper-efficient Austrian training regime.

"Maier is the new phenomenon in skiing," said the American Tommy Moe, who defends his Olympic downhill title tomorrow morning. "He's raising the whole level of interest in skiing. He is a real monster. You can understand why they call him Hermann Monster. He's got so much more hunger, because he's so new to it all."

He cheats gravity. His strength and balance make him so fast that for me he is the favourite here in three events.

"But he is beatable. Remember, Americans always rise to the Olympic Games and Austrians don't."

Moe's victory at the Lillehammer Games provided a similar shock for the European racers as his compatriot Bill Johnson's gold medal in the downhill at the 1984 Games.

But it would be a major upset if the Austrians failed to reflect their dominance on the slopes of Hakuba this week.

Maier, who finished in the top 10 during both days of downhill practice, has played down his chances, forecasting that the course - technically challenging, but not as steep as he likes - is more suited to his team-mate Andreas Schiffrer.

"Usually in practice you will see Maier concentrating on different sections of the course during each run," Bell said.

"He will blast one hit, then ease down on the next. But on the day, he will put it all together."

Hakuba, and the world, awaits.

Samaranch backs Games in S Africa

South Africa were yesterday given the strongest hint that they will be the county to bring the Olympics to Africa for the first time.

The endorsement of the Rainbow Nation came from the highest source. Juan Antonio Samaranch, the president of the International Olympic Committee, said that he hoped the Olympic Games will go to South Africa in 2008.

Cape Town was among the bidding cities for the 2004 Games, which were awarded to Athens last September. The venue for the 2008 Games will be selected in 2001.

"One continent is missing," Samaranch said in Nagano. "We hope in 2008 there will come other candidates from Africa. We hope very much we can hold the Games one day on this continent."

Other South African cities, including Pretoria and Johannesburg, are considered potential bidders.

"I'm not speaking only of Cape Town," Samaranch said. "It's up to their national Olympic committee to decide if other South African cities can bid for the games."

Osaka and Buenos Aires are the only declared candidates so far for 2008, although Paris is considering a bid.

Samaranch's comments came in response to a question from a Chinese television reporter, who asked whether the Games would go to another continent after Europe in 2004.

Peking was a narrow loser to Sydney in the race for the 2000 Games and China - notwithstanding the damage caused by recent doping scandals at swimming's World Championships - is considering a 2008 bid which could centre on Canton or Shanghai.

From plastic to fantastic: the first and only Springbok skier

The inspirations for Alex Heath's journey to the giant slalom in Nagano came from a pencil case and a dry slope in Kent. Andrew Murth meets the lone Springbok skier.



Alex Heath, on a dry slope in England where he learned how to ski, will become South Africa's first Olympic skier at Nagano

Photograph: Robert Hallam

As unlikely sporting achievements go, Alex Heath's ranks, at a glance, alongside the Jamaican bobsleigh team, celebrated in the Walt Disney film *Cool Runnings*. But whereas the Jamaicans were hopeless, plucky triers, there is nothing Mickey Mouse about Heath's Olympic challenge in the giant slalom in Nagano.

Heath is South Africa's first Olympic skier. And what makes the 19-year-old more extraordinary still is that he learned to ski not on snow-capped peaks - South Africa has only one small ski resort - but on the dry ski slopes of Kent.

Heath's journey from the land of the Bokke to Colorado where he now trains via England's garden county is intriguing. After all, surely what every young South African - even one with an English father - wants is to do the green and gold jersey of the Springbok, or perhaps play some cricket, football even.

Heath excelled at all the above at school, but he chose

instead to pursue the unlikely of goals because of a simple gift. On the eve of his family's departure for England when he was eight, Heath was given a pencil case by a friend. It bore a picture of a downhill racer, an image so different and inspiring that Heath was enthralled.

"I didn't know what skiing was really, and I'd never seen snow," he said. "I said to my parents, 'when I get to England, I'll be able to do this.'"

"At least the Alps are 6,000 miles closer," his bemused parents replied.

But the determined youngster was out in such a hopeless situation, since he soon discovered a 30m artificial slope in Folkestone eight miles from his new home. "I just absolutely loved it; there was nothing else I wanted to do," he recalls. "I didn't know what to expect but I took to it quite well and loved trying to go faster and faster."

Barely a few months after his first tentative descents, he was clutching his first medal as a victorious member of his primary school's B team.

Heath's determination to

succeed manifested itself, painfully, in regular, high-speed tumbles. But improvement was rapid and Heath progressed to longer slopes and stiffer competition. He even skied on snow at the age of 12.

The determination eventually paid off and Heath was the All England junior champion for two years. Other senior titles followed and he joined a ski club in Wengen where he received tuition from Austrian coaches. Heath switched to snow full time at the Waterville Ski Academy in New Hampshire.

With South Africa struggling off its pariah status, Heath became the country's only world-ranked skier in 1994. And having gained sufficient points through racing in the United States, he competed at the World Championships in Sierra Nevada, Spain, where he was the youngest competitor. There he improved 11 places on his start number of 79 in the super-G and he finished 30th in the slalom and giant slalom. From plastic to fantastic in barely six years.

While recovering from a cracked skull (after falling from a chio-up bar) he finished in 42nd place in a field of 110 in last year's World Championships in Sestriere, Italy.

Injury has limited his qualification for Nagano to the giant slalom alone, but he is far from daunted. "They say that the course is going to be hard. But I'm not going to change to way I am and in the future, hopefully, I'll finish more than I fall."

"I'm fortunate in that I'm 19 now and I've already been to two World Championships - I've got all that experience now, and I'll be going to an Olympic Games well before my competitive peak so I'm getting unbelievably valuable experience."

Unlikely as it sounds, South Africa's man of Kent may, one day, be its first man of gold.

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NORWAY						
Hemmel	Packed/groomed conditions	95%	4.3	70	70	Bright intervals
ROMANIA						
Snail	Wide cover of snow on all runs	85%	4.2	70	70	Bright intervals
SPAIN						
Serra Nevada	Strong winds affecting uplift	85%	3.0	70	60	Light snow
SWEDEN						
Safer	Fresh snow on surface	90%	3.2	75	80	Sunny
SWITZERLAND						
Verbier	Good skiing on upper runs	95%	21	60	130	Sunny
UNITED STATES						
Jackson Hole	Impressive depths at all levels	100%	3.2	200	240	Cloudy/bright

Snow Reports supplied by Ski Hotline

Calls to 0891 numbers cost 50p/min; to 08975 numbers £1/min at all times. Helpline 0990 133 345

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Greyhound glitz as going to the dogs goes upmarket

Down at the dogs, business is booming. "Anyone who comes through the gates once will be a convert," is the motto of greyhound racing's administrators, and a promotional blitz throughout 1997 is thought to have persuaded 100,000 spectators to pay their first visit to a track.

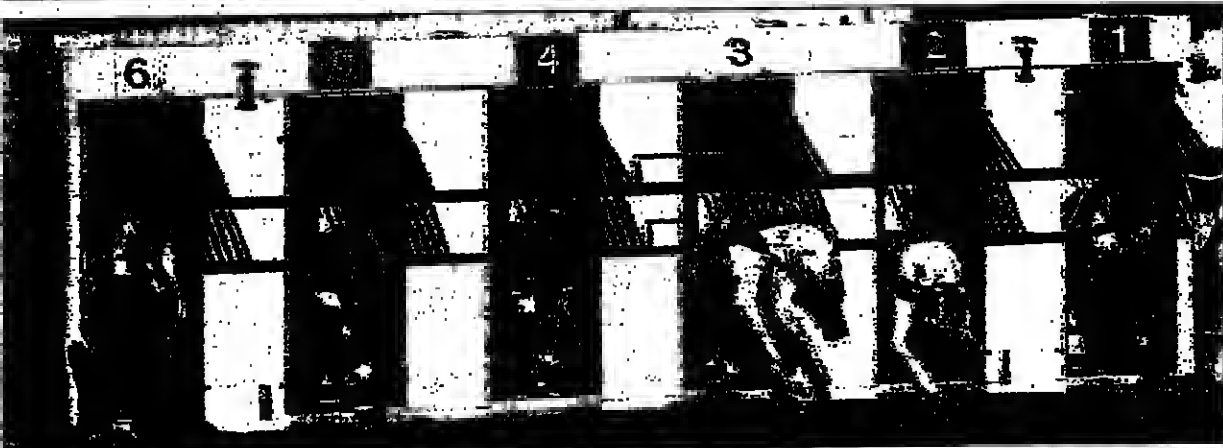
Attendances figures for the year are estimated to have risen by 15 per cent, a surge in popularity which even football's Premiership would struggle to match.

Our pictures capture a flavour of the action at Walthamstow, geographically reckoned to be the Ascot of the greyhound racing world, and Hove, the home track of Ballyregan Bob, who is still - along with Mick The Miller - one of the few racing dogs most people have heard of.

The sport may at last be shedding its downmarket image of shabby stadiums and substandard facilities, with investment and modernisation now the name of the game. In the trackside restaurants it is no longer a case of "whatever you like as long as it's in a basket" and there is always the chance that one lucky bet will cover the bill.

— Greg Wood

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PHOTOGRAPHS BY
DAVID ASHDOWN



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UTTOXETER
L15: Strong Chairman has been competing in good company at Cheltenham and Newbury of late. He must have a big sav here.

Careysville and MOUNTAIN BATH have been picking up prizes

145: Lucia Forte has been raised 9/16 after an easy win at Hozningdon last month, but this mare is talented. **146: Paula Anne** is

edited as a 100 for a Plumpton victory last night. RIPARIUS was well beaten at Ascot three weeks ago, but the likelihood of better going today can spark a return to form.

2:26: Him Of Praise will become a serious Grand National contender if taking this. This is his toughest test to date, though, and Ottawa and KAMIKAZE tempt at longer odds. Kim Bailey's grey

from her rivals is reported to have been schooling well.

3:45: The French import CYRUS MALTA receives 10th age allowance from his rivals, yet is more experienced over fences, having won twice at Auteuil. If the quick ground is a problem then Chief's Song may benefit.

3:55: Gold Cup hero Cool Dawn is compromised, though his most

2:30: THE SECOND favorite for the Champion Hurdle, *Shadow Leader*, hardly set the world alight when second to Karavi at Kempton on

The former National Hunt jockey

Steve Smith Eccles (right) gives a runner-by-runner analysis of today's Total Bookmakers Handicap Hurdle

three miles in soft ground last time.

At this trip he has each **way claims**.
Principle: Will struggle to improve
on his second at Warwick last time.
Not the most fluent jumper.
Moorish: Pulls hard and has to be
held up. Could hit traffic problems.
Blackhouse Boy: Not the best of
jumpers and could miss one but
Johnie: Hard to see him winning this
on his first outing this season.
Big Strand: An eye-catching third
on his seasonal debut. The one
from the Flat. Small horse who
may struggle physically.
Far Dawn: Could not win if he
started now.
Runaway Pete: Little chance on
this year's form.
Harbour Island: Runs best in
bankers but even though he has
then on here he should not figure.

Conclusion: The game Mistingnet
impressed me at Cheltenham last

they all have to beat. Friendship: Unlucky not to complete a hat-trick when falling at the last at Kempton. Each-way claims if that does not dent his confidence. week but I feel this tough race comes too soon. Friendship has sound each-way claims but **BIG STRAND** is very attractively weighted and will carry my liver.

[illegible]

1997: Donna Price & 12 O.J.P. Broderick B-1 (H McHargan) 4 ran

HENNESSY COGNAC GOLD CUP (GRADE 1 CHASE) \$100,000 3m Penalty Value \$58,500		BBC2	
1	21954	ANABATIC (F) (M J Prael) M J O'Brien 12 0	T P Radford
2	F4PPP	CORNET (14) (S J O'Sullivan) A P O'Brien 12 0	A Dobbins
3	1-115	DORANS PRICE (20) (C) (P) (J Doran) M O'Brien 12 0	P Diamond
4	P4P4U	GO BALLASTING (10) (C) (P) (S J Leachard) J O'Hagan 8 0	A Fitzgerald
5	1-115	FEZ HANNAH (14) (C) (P) (S J Leachard) J O'Hagan 8 0	J E O'Shea
6	3F-22	IMPERIAL CALL (10) (C) (P) (S J Leachard) J O'Hagan 8 0	C O'Dwyer
7	402C2	MERRY GALE (10) (C) (P) (H McHargan) J O'Hagan 10 2	N Williams

FIRST SHOW
11:10-12:00 PM

Uttotexer - 1.45	Sandown - 3.05
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Artist	G	H	L	I
Luce Forte	5.2	11.4	3.1	5.2
Rowena Arizola	11.2	7.1	8.4	7.1
Clackson	6.1	7.1	6.4	7.1
Melagrisio	3.1	8.1	8.1	7.1
Daily Star	10.1	10.1	10.1	8.1
Lough Kelly	10.1	10.1	11.1	11.1
Rhodes	3.1	12.1	11.1	11.1
Royal Pines	12.1	12.1	14.1	14.1
Wines's Pride	14.1	12.1	12.1	14.1

Artist	G	H	L	I
Dyer Meale	5.4	7.4	15.1	15.1
Jack Doyle	5.2	9.4	5.1	5.1
Dr Lenz	11.2	11.2	11.2	9.4
Chie's Song	7.1	7.1	12.1	12.1
Wayward King	8.1	5.1	11.1	11.1

Artist	G	H	L	I
Each way a quarter the above prices 1/2				

Holbrook	19-1	14-1	18-1	16-1
Alme O Thoms	25-1	24-1	16-1	25-1
Elkhus	25-1	20-1	20-1	25-1
Chasle Secord	25-1	16-1	33-1	25-1

Each way a quarter the odds, places 1, 2, 3

C - Coral H - William H L - Ladies T - Tot

Uttuxeter - 2.20

Horses	C	H	L	T
Big Shand	7-1	7-1	5-1	13-1
Polypod	5-1	11-1	6-1	13-1
Friendship	13-1	13-1	8-1	7-1
Herby Ireland	7-1	8-1	20-1	5-1

Mrs. O. Drake	7-4	5-2	6-4	8-4	Midway	8-1	8-1	8-1	8-1
Carl A. Day	9-1	11-2	9-2	13-2	Wichita	9-1	8-2	8-1	8-1
Abraham Lind	7-1	5-1	5-1	8-1	Whitman	16-4	10-4	8-1	8-1
Mrs. J. Boy	8-1	7-1	8-1	13-2	Outback	8-1	8-1	11-4	11-4
Cotton	7-1	6-1	7-1	13-2	Stockyards Bay	7-1	8-1	20-4	25-4
Kanawha	10-1	9-1	10-1	19-1	Dumchies	20-1	5-4	5-1	5-1
McGregor The Thief	18-1	12-1	13-1	23-1	Flammy's Pate	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Darling Ties	16-1	12-1	16-1	16-1	Justice	23-1	23-1	23-1	23-1
John's Lady	20-1	14-1	16-1	16-1	Land	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Greenleaf Tree Avenue	25-1	25-1	25-1	25-1					

First Place	33-1	25-1	25-1	25-1
Each way a fifth the odds, places 1, 2, 3				
C - Cont'd H - William H. L - Ladies' T - Tea				

Winning weight:	132	132	A	120	100	121	91	61	72
Winner's age:	10	8	A	5	6	8	7	8	6
Profit or loss to C1 stake:	Favourite	-£150	Second Favourite	-£450					
Percentage of winners placed 1st, 2nd or 3rd in last race:	67%								
Shortest-priced winner:	Miracle Man (1999)	3-1							
Longest-priced winner:	Black Sapphire (1982)	33-1							
Top trainers:	J FitzGerald - Special Verities (1989), Tranter (1993 & 1998)								
Top jockeys:	M Dwyer - Special Verities (1989), Tranter (1993)								

[illegible]

French danger signals have Woodward on his guard

Sporting sages are forever reminding us that a team are only as good as their last game, but England's barnstorming assault on the All Blacks at Twickenham in December continues to deflect attention from one uncomfortable fact: they have now gone six Tests without a win.

Chris Hewett says victory in Paris this afternoon would be worth its weight in gold.

Brian Moore's pitbullish assertion that playing the French at rugby was like "facing 15 Eric Cantona's" was meant – and taken – as an insult, but England would far rather look horns with a Parisian street gang of kung-fu-kicking pseudo-poets than with the unknown quantities selected to launch the Gal-

lic game into the 21st century at the Stade de France today. Any red-blooded Englishman worth his salt knew precisely how to provoke the Cantona combustibles into self-destruct mode, but what about Raphael Ibanez, Thomas Lievremon and Christophe Dominici? Can these newcomers be persuaded to blow a collective gasket?

The one thing that really worries Clive Woodward, Lawrence Dallaglio and the rest of the English hierarchy is the thought that this unfamiliar French side, led as it is by a rookie captain and stacked with ball-playing loose forwards rather than bit-men the size of Matterhorns, will prove disciplined as well as rapid, calm as well as imaginative.

"Something tells me that the French are at their most dangerous right now," said Woodward yesterday.

England's coach believes that the 50-point shellacking inflicted on *Les Tricolores* by the Springboks in November was, if

not quite a blessing in disguise, a salutary experience in the sense that it gave Jean-Claude Skrela and Pierre Villepreux, his opposite numbers, the chance to create a fresh side in their own expansive image.

"Villepreux, in particular, is a rugby purist with very definite ideas on how this game of ours should be played," Woodward said. "This is his opportunity to put those ideas into place."

Hence the abrupt departures of Philippe Saint-André, Thierry Lacroix, Olivier Merle and Laurent Cabannes from the equation. The new broom has swept aside Laurent Leflamand, David Venditti and Abdel Beazzzi, too. Not even Marc Dal Maso, perhaps the best hooker in the world last season, can find a place in today's starting line-up. The selectors wanted Ibanez as captain because he fitted snugly into their new-age philosophy and despite the bowels of disbelief from all corners of the French rugby hinterland, they got their man.

FRANCE v ENGLAND

at Stade de France

J. Sadoonoy	Colomiers	15	M Catt	Bath
P. Bernat-Salles	Pau	14	D Rees	Sale
C. Larnaison	Brive	13	J. Guscott	Bath
S. Glas	Bourgnin	12	W. Greenwood	Leicester
C. Dominici	Castres	11	A. Healey	Leicester
T. Castaignède	Castres	10	P. Grayson	Northampton
P. Carbonneau	Brive	9	K. Bracken	Saracens
C. Calafano	Toulouse	8	J. Leonard	Harlequins
R. Ibanez	Dax	7	M. Regan	Bath
F. Tournaire	Toulouse	6	D. Garforth	Leicester
F. Pelous	Toulouse	5	M. Johnson	Leicester
O. Brouzet	Bègles	4	G. Archer	Newcastle
B. Benetton	Agen	3	L. Dallaglio	Wasps
O. Magna	Brive	2	J. Back	Leicester
T. Lievremon	Perpignan	1	R. Hill	Saracens

Replacements: 16 K. Garbajosa (Toulouse); 17 P. de Galarreta (Bordeaux); 18 F. Galtier (Colomiers); 19 M. Llorenç (Stade Français); 20 T. Cheda (Pau); 21 C. Soulettes (Bordeaux); 22 M. Dal Maso (Agen).

Referee: D. Midgley (Ireland)

Kick-off: 2.0 (Sky Sports 2)

"This is a fresh side, an unfamiliar side, and that makes them a problem," Woodward said. "It's the side I would have picked had I been in their shoes. But we're happy with the side we've picked and if an English rugby player can't relish a

game in front of an 80,000 crowd wherever it might be, he shouldn't be looking to perform at international level.

"This game will be a pure adrenalin buzz for those involved. I know. I've played games in Paris and I can recall

what the atmosphere was like. I envy these players because I wish I could still do what they're doing."

For the record, Woodward played at the old Parc des Princes on three occasions as an England centre, winning twice. "Sadly, it's the real thrashing we took in 1984 that I remember best of all," he said. "I don't want these guys to go through anything like that."

But it is Woodward himself who could most do without an explosion of French *jolie de vivre* today. The coach is still comfortably in credit following the difficult but generally encouraging series of matches against New Zealand, South Africa and Australia before Christmas, but he knows better than anyone that he is now moving into more perilous waters.

For the first time, the rugby public back home expects nothing less than a victory and as a result the heat is very much on.

"I know England have gone six Tests without a win but I'm not thinking along those lines,"

he insisted as he ran a tutored eye over the vast bowl of the new stadium yesterday.

"I take my starting point from the last fixture – I've never been any different – and therefore, I'm looking at guys who drew 26-apiece with a great New Zealand team. The videos tell us that we didn't actually play as well as we thought that day, but it was still a big plus, a step along the road to where we want to go. This game is about taking another step."

As an ex-centre who prefers to leave the whys and wherefores of the scrum, ruck and maul to his specialist advisers, Woodward none the less appreciates that today's outcome rests squarely on the shoulders of his front row.

It is not a vintage trio by any manner of means: Jason Leonard is struggling to rediscover his old authority on the loose head, Mark Regan's rumbustious form around the paddock has been undermined by his inability to hit a barn door with a double bass and Darren

Garforth remains an honest journeyman rather than a state-of-the-art Test tight head. Opposing them are Christian Calafano and Frank Tounaie, two props of undisputed world class.

"It will be a hard old afternoon, that's for sure," said Regan yesterday as he paddled his way around a Versailles hotel swimming pool in an effort to soothe the effects of a week of shuddering work-outs at the business end of the scrummaging machine. "We can take 'em, though. I've got some good boys around me."

Mmmm. The danger for England is that Calafano and Tounaie will match the murderous physical battering dished out by Os de Randi and Adrian Garvey during the Springboks' record win at Twickenham in the autumn. If Regan and company fail to hold the twin terrors of Toulouse, England will go into their next match against Wales with the catchphrase "win or bust" ringing in their ears.

Bleak days over for Bracken the born-again red rose international

It is more than four years since a cynical All Black flanker by the name of Jamie Joseph unwittingly made a sporting icon of Kyran Bracken with one sly stamp of his right boot.

Bracken slowly recovered from the physical effects of that assault but it has taken him until now to re-establish his credentials as the brightest England scrum-half of his generation who is making up for lost time.

Kyran Bracken was guaranteed his 15 minutes of fame within two minutes of the start of his England debut. As the Bristol law student spun out a trademark pass from the first line-out of the Twickenham International against New Zealand in November 1993, a soaring lump of south island nastiness picked his moment, selected his spot and, as soon as the referee turned his back, stamped hard on the newcomer's ankle, tearing the sinews and straining the ligaments to breaking point.

History records that Bracken not only played on – an unfeasible act in itself, given the severity of his injury – but summoned up one of the definitive scrum-half performances of recent memory, coaxing and cajoling a match-winning effort from a grizzled, seen-it-and-done-it pack to whom he had been introduced a mere 48 hours previously. Suddenly, the back pages were no longer at the races. Cuddly Kyran was super-sexy front-page material, a heart-throb bico with attitude.

So what happened? Why are we not now discussing a 30-cap England veteran, a Test Lion, a 24-carat celeb? It is a cautionary tale. A victim of his own bravery, Bracken took a

series of gambles with his own fitness that would have made the quackiest of quack doctors blanch and as a result, he very nearly put the brightest of futures behind him. In short, he committed the deadliest rugby sin of them all. He played injured.

He played before his ankle was fully mended, he played with a serious back condition, he played with glandular fever, he played with groin trouble. Like Terry Holmes, the brilliant but ultimately unfulfilled Welsh scrum-half of the early 1980s, his courage frequently undermined his judgement. Only now, in the supremely professional environment of a resurgent Saracens, has he finally accepted the truism that discretion is the better part of valour.

"I think everyone plays with niggles from time to time," he points out. "Rugby is a hard old game and there aren't many Mondays when you can avoid the treatment table entirely and if you pulled out with every bump and bang, you'd never get on the pitch."

"But I've realised now that serious fitness problems need rest and treatment, not 80 minutes of physical purgatory. I was carrying a groin injury as recently as last season. It didn't stop me playing, but it definitely stopped me playing to the best of my ability. It's counter-productive. I know that now."

"When I had glandular fever, I lost a stone in weight and played terribly. But I was at Bristol then and they were struggling. They didn't put pressure on me to play – I want to emphasise that point – but I felt honour bound to turn out, to do my bit. I thought I'd get through, that it would be all right. It wasn't all right, though. It was bloody awful."

"Thankfully, the professional game doesn't wear that sort of nonsense. Preparation is

so thorough now, so detailed, that even if you were desperate to play injured, you couldn't hope to pull the wool over everyone's eyes, to fool all of the doctors and physios all of the time. I love playing rugby and I adore the rough and tumble of it all, but you have to be sensible and keep the lid on your frustration."

That particular emotion has claimed more than its pound of flesh from Bracken. He travelled to the 1995 World Cup as England's Grand Slam scrum-half but, short of full fitness as usual, found himself marginalised by Dewi Morris and subsequently had to watch Matt Dawson, Andy Gomarsall and Austin Healey fill the national No 9 shirt with varying degrees of authority.

Then, last summer, he narrowly missed out on Lions selection and when he finally made it to South Africa as a replacement for Rob Howley, he played half a game before picking up yet another injury.

This season, though, he is back in his pomp and operating at an all-embracing level beyond the grasp of any of his rivals (his cover tackles are in the Healey class, he works his pack as expertly as Dawson, he senses a gap as instinctively as Gomarsall and his pass, the basic tool of his trade, is the most accomplished of the four). His move to Saracens 18 months ago appears to have been the making of him.

"Bath got in touch with me as soon as it became obvious that I was no longer happy at Bristol, but I needed a change from the West Country scene. I can't say I have any regrets. Bristol was an intense situation in the sense that I felt their expectations of me were very high. Expectations are high at Sarries too, but we have so many quality players in important

positions that the atmosphere is more favourable."

"Working with François Pienaar has been a real eye-opener. He has the hardest, most purely competitive edge of any coach I've encountered; he wants us to play total rugby and he believes the only way of accomplishing that is to be the fittest side in the Premiership. You don't mess about with him on any account. When I first joined, I thought I'd live in central London and commute to training. It wasn't enough, not by a long chalk. Now I live very close to our Southgate ground and base my entire lifestyle around my rugby."

Not that Bracken is a rugby bore, far from it. Indeed, he fears for the teenagers who put college and university on the back-burner to try their luck with a professional club. "What will they have to fall back on if they fail to make it? Where does rugby leave a 23-year-old who has never done anything but chuck a ball around?" he asks.

"I soaked up a massive amount of experience during my time at Bristol University, where I played all sorts of rugby, fairly anonymous stuff with my mates as well as high-profile matches, and if all this ended tomorrow, I'd be able to go back to the law and pick up where I left off. Perhaps professionalism has made it more difficult for youngsters to enjoy a bit of variety in their lives. That saddens me, frankly."

Bracken will need to draw on a good deal of life experience just to survive the hostility certain to be generated by an 80,000-strong Parisian crowd this afternoon. "It's always fun, playing the French," he says. "The fact that you can't understand a word they're saying adds something to the frenzy of it all."

The French will understand Bracken, that's for sure. One look at the expression on his face will tell them just how much he is enjoying life as a born-again international.



No 9 lives: Kyran Bracken is ready to resume an England career curtailed by a series of injuries Photograph: Peter Jay

Califano at the forefront of France's aggressive first line of defence



Califano: the 'battering ram' dreams of centre stage

Christian Calafano, France's admitted tight-head prop, is ready to exorcise the spectre of a humiliating defeat as the Tricolores confront England today, he tells Ian Borthwick in Paris.

Rugby has been good to Christian Calafano. The Toulouse tight-head prop, who wins his 37th cap for France today, is one of the best-paid players in France, and although the sums of money here have not yet reached the ruinous amounts being dished out in England, the 25-year-old has come a long way from the housing estate in Toulon where he grew up.

Toulon, the macabre naval town on the Mediterranean shores, is known as one of the

hotbeds of rugby in France, and the suburb of La Valette, like so many nameless, soulless mass-housing developments which are the bane of French city life, is notorious for breeding barmen, and adolescents with a delinquent streak.

These days, Calafano remains understandably discreet about his misspent youth, and prefers not to talk about the difficult years he spent growing up in La Valette with his mother and two sisters. "I am not ashamed of where I come from. But I alone know what I went through in my adolescent years. I prefer not to go over it again, but it is true that without rugby, things might have ended up badly for me."

A Grand Slam champion with France last year, he has also been on a high with his club Stade Toulousain, which he joined from Toulon in 1992, win-

ning four national championship titles in a row. Unanimously admired in France for his uncomplicated but genuine human warmth, he always has a moment for the bereft-wearing pensioners who stop him in the streets of Toulouse, and in the recent school holidays, seeing a group of idle teenagers near his club grounds, he grabbed a football, went over to talk to them, and the next thing Calafano and the youngsters were having a kickabout on a nearby pitch. "Rugby has changed my life, and in everything I do, I just try to give back to the game everything it has given me."

One of the ironies of his career is that he first won selection for France at the expense of his childhood friend, Marc de Rougemont. Born eight days apart in the same clinic in La Valette, "Cali" and "Rouge"

were inseparable in their youth, and when De Rougemont was a late withdrawal from the 1994 tour to New Zealand, it was Calafano who took his place.

Luck continued to be on Calafano's side, as he won his first cap on that tour – against the All Blacks in Christchurch – and has never looked back. Virtually an automatic choice in the French front row, Calafano has developed into arguably one of the best front-row forwards in the world, capable of playing on either side of the scrum. His round, teddy-bear appearance belies a powerful frame capable of bench-pressing 160 kilos, but perhaps the most surprising aspect is his remarkable speed for a man of 109kg. At a recent French squad session Calafano reeled off some sprint times which embarrassed a number of the threequarters. His 12.03 seconds for the 100 metres is

perhaps nothing exceptional, but 3.07sec over 20 metres and 6.49 over 50 put him among the fastest in the team. It is hardly surprising to learn, then, that his secret desire is to play centre threequarter, preferably alongside Thomas Castaignède. "I just need to lose 10 kilos or so, and we could form a brilliant tandem: the perfect combination of the tactician and the battering ram!"

One of the few to have emerged with any credit from the disastrous two-Test series against the Springboks last November, this passionate and tireless competitor, was also one of the most deeply affected by the record-breaking 52-10 loss at the Parc des Princes. It was an occasion which was supposed to have been the Tricolores' emotional farewell to the famous Paris stadium, but it ended like a knife in the heart

for this normally effervescent character.

After the match Calafano spoke and walked like a man in a daze. According to close friends, it took him days to get over the shock, and while many people considered him to be the player of the year in France, he felt like a humiliated schoolboy. "There were so many famous ex-internationals in the stands that day, and I wanted so much to be worthy of them," he confided. "Jerome Gallion was there: when I was a kid growing up in Toulon, he was my hero. But now I don't know if I can ever look him in the eyes again."

Today's game against England is a chance for Calafano and his team-mates to erase that memory, and what he calls the shame and humiliation of the defeat. "We know that we have to respond to the new challenges

that England represents. We all saw how they performed against New Zealand in the Twickenham game last December, and we are aware of the efforts we have to make to prevent them from scoring," he says.

The opening game of the 1998 Calafano may be a little early for Calafano to exercise his talents as a centre, and he is more likely to be concentrating on putting in extra tackles than in popping up outside Castaignède for a scintillating mid-field break. "If we want to compete with the English we have to make sure our defence keeps them out. That is our priority for the game: an aggressive first line of defence."

The southern hemisphere teams have shown the way. It doesn't matter if you are a prop or a full-back, you're both expected to put in the same number of tackles in a match."

RUGBY UNION: FIVE NATIONS

Irish front line primed to scotch Scots' revival hopes

Even before a ball has been kicked in anger, Ireland's meeting with Scotland in Dublin today is being billed as the battle of the underdogs. David Lewellyn looks at two sides who may be locked in a desperate tussle to avoid the wooden spoon.

Slam and the Lions veteran believes that the key areas are in the back row and at half-back. The latter area sees Gary Armstrong, who takes over the captaincy from Rob Wainwright, picking up his 20-match partnership with outside-half Craig Chalmers.

In the most recent meeting between these two sides, at Murrayfield last year, Scotland recorded their biggest win and highest score (38-10) over the Irish. It was also their highest score in the championship.

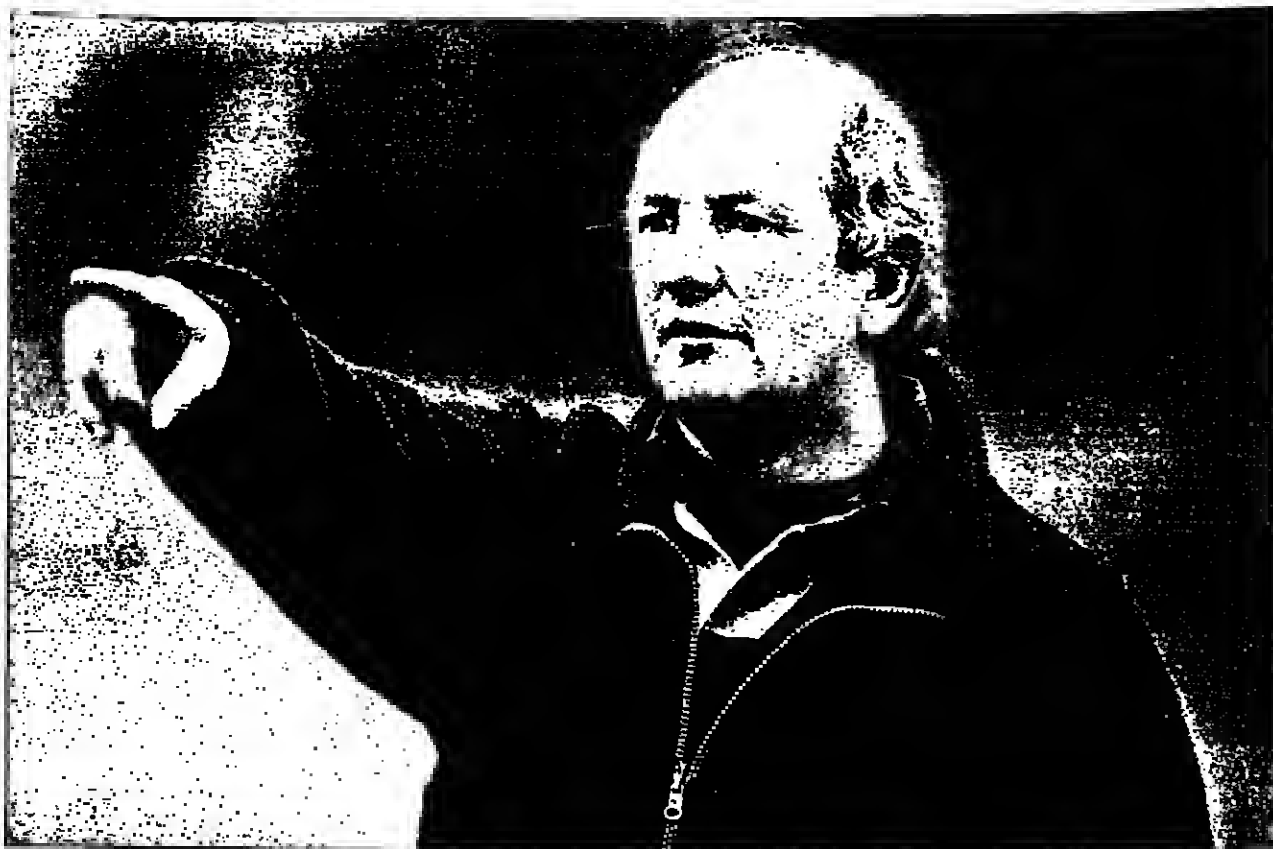
But while logic dictates that the losers of this particular dog fight will almost certainly be left clutching the dreaded wooden spoon, the Ireland coach, Brian Ashton, thinks that could be a case of barking up the wrong tree and he growled: "People who say that are being premature. I don't think any of the 30 players or either management team regards it in that light."

Keith Wood, the Ireland captain who was injured and consequently missed last season's Taitan humiliation, is confident that the trend of Scotland domination can be reversed. "We are sick of the Scots," he said. "It's about time we won. Last year there was an awful lot of faults, which happens from time to time. I don't think anything like that will happen this year."

"The preparation has gone really well, our back row will be pretty impressive. We've a decent pack and line-out and we will have a few tricks in our back line that could frighten them a bit."

One member of the back row is Eric Miller, who has had an indifferent season at No 8 for Leicester and following his success on the Lions tour, has looked a bit stale. But he epitomises the mood of the upbeat Ireland camp.

"We're very strong up front and, with the type of game we're trying to play, it is very hard to stop us once we get going," he said. Clearly, the wooden spoon will not be accepted without a fight.



Brian Ashton: 'Until we start enticing players back to Ireland we are going to struggle'

Photograph: Allsport

Ashton's Ireland taking right direction

Brian Ashton, the Ireland coach, hopes his side will finally equal the sum of the parts and make a vital winning start against Scotland in the Five Nations' Championship in Dublin today.

Ian Stafford talked to him about the massive job he took on.

One year ago Brian Ashton was hailed as the new saviour of Irish rugby, largely because of a brave but nevertheless heavy defeat at home to the French. It left the former Bath coach wondering just what had he let himself in for.

"It was a real warning bell for me because I thought, if they're happy when they lose, we've got major problems," he said. Now, on the eve of this season's Five Nations' Championship, Ashton has a clearer, and not particularly encouraging, idea.

"We are the least professional Five Nations country, and I expected changes to be made which haven't been yet," he is quite happy to reveal. "Until we start enticing our players back to Ireland, which will mean a complete overhaul of the domestic game, we're going to struggle. That's why I have to depend on English-based players. I don't want to do this, but I don't have much choice."

Ashton's injury list has hand-

ly helped matters. Short of world-class players at the best of times, Ireland have lost the services of players as good as Jeremy Davidson, Simon Geoghegan, Jim Staples and Jonathan Bell. "We obviously don't have the strength in depth like the English, so we're bound to be hit harder by such losses. But the bigger problem has been Ireland's struggle to produce a professional game at home, which would keep the best players over here."

Incredibly, murmurs of discontent about Ashton's six-year contract have already begun. Ireland finished bottom of the Five Nations last year, lost heavily to New Zealand and by a closer margin, to Italy, before Christmas, and enter today's widely considered wooden spoon-decider against Scotland in Dublin with little to suggest their harren run will end.

Ashton takes all this on the chin. "It's difficult to argue against that case," he agreed. "I suppose it depends on both sides to prove the doubters wrong. We just need a little time. Don't forget, I was brought into the team a week before the first Five Nations game last season, and only began my official appointment last April, since when I've been in charge for three games."

"I think people were expecting a dramatic change in fortunes, but it's obviously going to take some time. I'm well aware that results are the most important aim, but I'm not going to revert back to type just

so that we can claim a win. The progress we are making is more important than that."

It is here that Ashton holds out hope. Last April he told me he aimed to coach Ireland back up to England's level, and therefore world level, by the year 2003, which would mark the end of his contract. One year on he still maintains this goal. "It's still possible, but the Irish public and rugby supporters are going to need to show some faith here. At least we've all identified the type of rugby we want to play, which is the type I've always promoted and now seems to be the accepted approach by most countries."

"I also expect us now to be competitive for 80 minutes, instead of an hour we've played before. We have 12 English-based players in the side, so there shouldn't be any excuses there."

"I think the hardest barrier to clear is just the habit of losing. I'm not certain the players have the confidence to win matches, at least not in an Irish green jersey. It's amazing, really, to see them on the training pitch."

"There they work as hard, and look as good as any other team in the Five Nations. When they play for their clubs they are used to winning matches, but as soon as they wear the green of Ireland the inhibition factor comes into it."

A win tomorrow could change everything. "I really think that's all it could take," Ashton said. "It would break that

losing habit and give the team a great deal of confidence. It would mean that we could look forward to the rest of the Five Nations in the hope that we could get at least one further win."

"But I'm not going out just to win. The way we play, in the long term, is far more important, than kicking our way to victory for the sake of a result. That's been part of the problem in the past. A win at Twickenham would make everyone satisfied, regardless of whatever else happened in the Five Nations. Now, though, there's no way we'd get a win at Twickenham, not until the work's been put in. It's already started, and I'm hoping some of this might begin to show."

With this in mind the beleaguered Scots would seem to be the ideal opposition for Ashton's men. Their pre-Christmas programme was as disastrous as the Irish, and with internal ructions rife, they appear to be ripe for further defeat.

Ashton has two ways of looking at this. "That's certainly one accurate theory, but the other one is that they, under Jim Telfer and Ian McGeechan, will be fired up to the hilt to perform against us, and we've got to be very careful."

"Still, I know what we can do. I know that I have a lot of talented players who have not done themselves justice yet, and if we can play to the best of our ability, then I am pretty confident we'll get the right result."

CRICKET

Pair's courage earns them the luck they needed

England's overnight batsmen managed to frustrate the West Indies bowlers yesterday. Tony Cazier reports from Port of Spain.

A combinations of factors allowed England to frustrate the West Indies and build up a reasonable first-innings total on the second morning of the second Test. The first, and foremost, was the courage and determination of Nasser Hussain and Angus Fraser. The second was the ineffectiveness of the West Indies fast bowlers who had created so many problems on the opening day. The third was the asset sportsman value as highly as any other, luck.

Hussain had already earned his badge of courage throughout his vigil the previous day. It has taken some time but he has, in the last year or so, matured into the high-quality player he seemed destined to become when he first toured the West Indies in 1990, aged 21. His patience and perseverance were essential in shepherding the lower order through on a pitch, and against bowling, that posed problems for even the specialist batsmen.

He was never fazed by several blows to hands and body and showed the kind of faith in his less accomplished partners that fill them with confidence. As Gary Sobers used to do at No 6 for the West Indies he was not overprotective, allowing Andrew Caddick, Dean Headley and Fraser to

handle the situation like the Test cricketers they are. They responded with a high sense of responsibility.

Fraser was especially impressive. He took a fearful crack on the helmet to the first ball of the day from Kenny Benjamin but he never flinched throughout his vital resistance. It was the kind of spirit that promotes the entire team. It also deflates and upsets the opposition.

With just two wickets needed to complete their job, Curtly Ambrose and Benjamin would have been expected to resume firing on all cylinders as they had been less than 24 hours earlier, especially after Benjamin's direct first ball hit. Instead, they lacked their controlled menace of the first day as Hussain and Fraser became entrenched.

They would not have been the first attack to simply wait for the quick and inevitable end of the innings on such a capricious surface. By the time they realised it was not going to be that easy, Hussain and Fraser had got the hang of things and Brian Lara was ringing the changes.

They can justifiably claim they were not favoured by fortune, that half-inch here, quarter-inch there, was the difference between the ball clipping the edge and going past the bat. But there is a proven axiom in sport that the more you put in the luckier you get and the West Indies bowlers did not seem to be at full throttle.

In addition, on such a pitch, batsmen deserve more than there fair share of the luck that is going.

Sri Lanka collapse against England's left-arm spinners

Sri Lanka A 171
England A 47-1
Myles Hodgson reports from Matara

Dean Cosker and Ashley Giles bowled England A into a commanding position on the opening day of the second unofficial Test here yesterday. The left-arm spinners claimed seven wickets between them as Sri Lanka A, who elected to bat after a 45-minute delay because ground-staff had over-watered the wicket, were dismissed for 171.

Giles claimed 4 for 52 while Cosker grabbed 3 for 46 as the pair bowled virtually unchanged in tandem as Sri Lanka lost their last nine wickets for 101 runs.

England made a disastrous start to their reply with the captain, Nick Knight, being trapped lbw by Rachina Perera with the third ball of the innings but Steve James finished unbeaten on 25 while Darren Maddy continued his prolific form by reaching the close on 22.

England A will take advice from government officials following another fatal bomb blast in Colombo yesterday.

The tour manager, Graham Gooch, is to discuss the situation with the British High Commission today after the Tamil Tigers terrorist group exploded a bomb in the country's capital which killed seven people.

It follows a previous attack in Kandy on the famous Temple of the Tooth which resulted in 13 deaths and prompted a revision to the original itinerary, cutting the tour short by 10 days.

Sri Lanka A won toss; first day of tour
SRI LANKA A - First innings
R P Arnold c Nash b Hutchinson 15
A Gunawardena c Knight b Giles 51
N Mawera c and b Giles 5
D M Jayawardena c Knight b Cosker 5
M C Mendis c and b Cosker 58
D de Silva c Maddy b Cosker 5
P P Desamunera c Knight b Giles 2
H Baduge c Eastham b Hutchinson 0
N Bandula b not out 10
R Perera c Nash b Giles 4
A Anura b Hutchinson 0
Extras (b, lb, nb) 1
Total (223 overs) 171
Fall: 1-43, 2-70, 3-81, 4-88, 5-97, 6-114, 7-125, 8-127, 9-128.
England A - First innings
S P James not out 23
N V Knight lbw b Perera 22
D Maddy not out 22
Extras (b, lb, nb) 1
Total (for 2, 16 overs) 47
Fall: 1-1.
To bat: M A Eastham, O J Giles, B C Hollace, D R Brown, A P Giles, D C Nash, D A Cosker, P M Hutchinson.
Bowling: Perera 3-4-16-1; Baduge 5-1-6-0; Bandula 1-0-0-0; Junaid 2-0-11-0; Umper 1-0-0-0.
Umpires: R N S Seneviratne and T H Wijewe.

IRELAND v SCOTLAND

at Lansdowne Road			
C O'Shea	London Irish	15 R Shepherd	Watsonians
R Wallace	Saracens	14 C Joiner	Leicester
K Maggs	Bristol	13 A Tait	Newcastle
M McCall	London Irish	12 G Townsend	Northampton
D Hickey	St Mary's	11 K Logan	Wesps
D Humphreys	London Irish	10 C Chalmers	Melrose
B O'Meara	Cork Const	9 G Armstrong	Newcastle, capt
R Corrigan	Greystones	8 G Graham	Newcastle
K Wood	Harlequins, capt	7 G Bulloch	West of Scotland
P Wallace	Saracens	6 M Stewart	Northampton
P Johns	Saracens	5 D Cronin	Wesps
M O'Kelly	London Irish	4 D Weir	Newcastle
D Corkery	Bristol	3 R Wainwright	Dundee H&FP
K Dawson	London Irish	2 S Holmes	London Scottish
E Miller	Leicester	1 P Walton	Newcastle

Replacements: 16 S McDowell (Harlequins); 17 E Bred (Greystones); 18 S McKee (Greystones); 19 N Poplewell (Newcastle); 20 R McKeown (Newcastle); 21 G Bulloch (London Irish); 22 V Connolly (St Mary's).
Referee: A Watson (South Africa).
Kick-off: 3.0 (BBC1)

BASKETBALL

Irony not lost on Leopards

Sheffield Sharks are one game away from the semi-final of the British Basketball League Trophy final at Birmingham's NEC on 8 March, yet Chris Finch's team would not even have reached the last eight had it not been for their semi-final opponents, Greater London Leopards.

The irony was not lost on Leopards' coach, Billy Mims, after Sheffield routed them 103-85 in the first leg of the semi at Ponds Forge on Wednesday night. Sheffield qualified from the north group for the quarter-final draw as the fourth-placed team with the best record. But Mims said: "If we'd lost to Watford in our last group game, they would have got into the last eight instead of Sheffield."

Sheffield are now favourites to face London Towers, who beat Newcastle Eagles 102-84 in their first leg. But Mims has not given up hope for his side's second leg on Thursday. "We've already beaten Sheffield by 14 points in the league. Of course we can do it," he said.

Richard Taylor

SAILING

Standbridge plays it smart

Paul Standbridge was continuing to play the smart game as Toshiba protected an 18-mile lead on the sixth day of the fifth leg of the Whitbread Round the World Race from New Zealand to Brazil yesterday.

The American and his navigator Andrew Cape have twice made the moves which have given Toshiba the advantage as the nine-boat fleet worked hard to make the best of light winds since leaving Auckland.

Behind Standbridge is Gun-

nar Krantz in Swedish Match and then come four boats separated by only four miles. Meanwhile, Innovation Kvaerner, EF Education and Brunel Sunergy are all but becalmed at the rear.

WHITBREAD ROUND THE WORLD RACE (from leg 5, 2,270 miles, Auckland, NZ, to Sao Paulo, Brazil): 1 Toshiba (GB) P Standbridge 5,365 miles to finish; 2 Swedish Match (Swe) G Krantz 5,358 miles to finish; 3 EF Education (Swe) S Cresswell 5,358 miles to finish; 4 Brunel Sunergy (Neth) K Krantz 5,358 miles to finish; 5 Innovation Kvaerner (Neth) K Krantz 5,358 miles to finish; 6 Gun-

nar Krantz 5,358 miles to finish; 7 Innovation Kvaerner (Neth) K Krantz 5,358 miles to finish; 8 Innovation Kvaerner (Neth) K Krantz 5,358 miles to finish; 9 Innovation Kvaerner (Neth) K Krantz 5,358 miles to finish.

Stuart Alexander, Auckland

BOXING

King declares 'love' for Tyson

Don King has promised to stand by the former world champion, Mike Tyson, through what he describes as "a frustrating period."

Tyson, who was banned from boxing after biting a piece out of Evander Holyfield's ear in their world title bout last June, asserted earlier this week that he had severed ties with his long-time promoter King.

The American heavyweight

revealed that he had taken control of his own affairs and hired new attorneys and accountants.

"He's always been in control of his own affairs," King said. "I've worked with Mike Tyson and he has controlled his own career. I know he is going through a frustrating period at the moment but I will stand beside him and be there for him. I love Mike Tyson and he knows that."

RUGBY LEAGUE

Crooks goes up to Oxford

The former Great Britain forward, Lee Crooks, has been given the chance to revive his coaching career with the ambitious Oxford Cavaliers.

Crooks retired as a player last season and has been out of the game since the end of his temporary role on Castleford's coaching staff.

Oxford, of the southern-based Rugby League Conference, have had talks with Crooks, whose vast experience they see steering them towards professional status.

The Cavaliers are joining forces with the Oxford Harlequins rugby union club in a major stadium development that will also strengthen their eventual case for Rugby League membership.

Halifax are not, after all, to bid farewell to their home for 112 years this weekend. Thrum Hall was due to stage its last match, a friendly against Huddersfield, tomorrow, but has been given a stay of execution.

Because the two clubs have been drawn together in the Silk Cut Challenge Cup next week, tomorrow's game has

been called off. Any home ties in the Cup will continue to be played at Thrum Hall with a final commemorative game to be staged after that. Halifax will move in with Halifax Town at The Shay in time for the Super League season.

The club has been given a boost for the game with the news that their booker, Paul Rowley, who was thought to have broken his hand, will be fit.

Keighley, who along with other First Division teams start their marathon 30-match season tomorrow, have dropped their High Court action against the Rugby League after being told that they will receive their full allocation of Murdoch money this season.

The Cougars have been made favourites for the title, which will be decided by a five-team play off at the end of the campaign, but Whitehaven and Featherstone, who meet tomorrow, look at least as strong.

Swinton Lions' former Welsh international prop, Mark Sheals, announced his retirement yesterday at the age of 31.

Dave Hadfield

HOCKEY

Sixsmith blow for Sutton

Slough, favourites to add the national outdoor title to the indoor crown they won last weekend, travel to Cannock to play struggling Sutton Coldfield as the Women's National League resumes after the winter break.

Both teams have injury concerns. Sutton could be without Jane Sixsmith, who missed last weekend's Tests against Australia with a damaged rib while Slough have Karen Brown doubtful with a hamstring injury sustained in the first Test. While

Slough, with their vast array of talent, can cope without Brown, the loss of Sixsmith to Sutton will be a major blow.

Third-placed Olton Terenure play host to Clifton, in second, and defeat for the Midlands would make their chances of overhauling the visitors slim. A win for Leicester, who expect to have their four internationalists back, at Chelmsford would surely put the latter out of contention for the title.

Bill Colwell

SNOOKER

Hendry in cautious mood

Stephen Hendry should have breezed untroubled into the semi-finals of the Benson and Hedges Masters at Wembley last night.

The 29-year-old World No 1 was facing Nigel Bond, an opponent he had defeated in 12 of their 15 career meetings.

Yet, while the bookmakers had Hendry as a short-priced favourite to win the £145,000 first prize, the man himself was

not entirely optimistic. "Nigel's a tremendous player and I'll definitely have to improve to get the better of him," Hendry said. "My confidence isn't 100 per cent because it's been so long since I've won a tournament."

Hendry's cause was aided on Thursday when Ronnie O'Sullivan, who has proved a thorn in his side on numerous occasions, was beaten 6-3 by the defending champion Steve Davis.

JUDO

Howey just misses medal

Do not shake the hand of the world judo champion, Kate Howey. That is certainly the conclusion drawn by her French opponent in the opening round of the Tournoi de Paris yesterday. For in the initial exchange, Isabelle Beaumelle dislocated a finger and had to withdraw - after just four seconds.

And there is no doubt that the 24-year-old world title holder from Andover is a formidable opponent even if, in this first international of the year, she failed to win a medal.

In the second round, Joong-Suk Lim of South Korea simply could not believe it when Howey scooped her off the ground to throw her for two scores with morote-gari, her famous rugby-tackle throw.

But the new weight of 70 kilos for the middleweight - up from 66kg - has attracted lightweighters, including Yena Scapin of Italy. She caught Howey with an opportunist, then used her larger bulk to hold off the English fighter.

Philip Nickson

Resurgent Everton shed blood, sweat and relegation fears

According to Goodison Park's management duo of Howard Kendall and Adrian Heath, the club's return to form is all due to confidence.

After months of doom and gloom at Goodison Park, the back-page lead in Merseyside's morning newspaper reflects the upbeat mood enveloping Everton. But while Howard Kendall's manager of the month award may be the only thing they win all season, Adrian Heath is not reading too much into it.

Heath is in no doubt that Kendall richly deserves the honour. It is just that under the football sub-section of sod's law, its recipients customarily come a cropper in their next match. Although there are few clubs where the past has a more evocative presence, this is one tradition which Everton's managerial duo are anxious not to uphold today.

Victory at Barnsley would plump up a nine-point cushion between Everton and the bottom side: defeat would erode their position dangerously. Kendall, 51, is too canny for what he calls "all that stuff about a game we can't afford to lose", yet is acutely aware of the stakes for which they are playing. As if to prove that none of Liverpool's great institutions is immune to collapse, the front of Heath's paper carries news of drastic redundancies at Vernons Pools.

When Kendall first came to Goodison as a player, in 1967, Everton were bankrolled by John Moores of Littlewoods Pools fame. By the time he returned as manager, 14 years later, funds were still plentiful enough for him to lavish a club-record £700,000 on Heath.

The assistant manager, now 37, had been an apprentice at Stoke when they met. "Adrian was a 16-year-old cross-country runner and I was coming to the end of my playing career," Kendall recalled. "So this little fella, bombing around, embarrassed me a few times. He always had the enthusiasm. Now he's got the knowledge."

They have worked together five times, never more successfully than when Everton won two championships, one FA Cup and a European Cup-Winners' Cup in the mid-1980s. After they left, their hearts stayed behind. Last summer, Kendall forsook Sheffield United for a third spell in charge; Heath relinquished the top job at Burnley to join him.

In one critical sense, the Everton to which they returned was not the one they first knew. However wealthy the chairman, Peter Johnson, may or may not be, he is no Jack Walker. Despite the realisation that money is no longer an object—or maybe because of it—fans

who saw Kendall's appointment as a retrograde step now inundate local radio phone-ins to admit they were wrong.

The shift in public opinion is remarkable given that Everton dropped up the Premiership as recently as mid-December. When they won at Leicester with a late penalty—their first away win in 12 months—there was an understandable temptation to invest the moment with the symbolism of Heath's fabled equaliser at Oxford 14 years earlier. That goal reputedly transformed a blue period into a golden era.

"With respect to Adrian, you don't suddenly have a very good side because you've drawn one particular game at Oxford," Kendall says. "We don't suddenly have a side who shouldn't be struggling because we won at Leicester. The real value was the boost to confidence. You should have seen the dressing-room afterwards."

Heath had seen it coming for three or four away matches. "We'd had a good goal ruled out at Villa, missed a penalty that would have won it at Leeds and led Blackburn 2-1 with nine minutes left. It

BY PHIL
SHAW

wasn't as if we were getting steam-rollered."

The lowest point for Kendall came in October, a 4-1 capitulation at Coventry in the Coca-Cola Cup which prompted him to go on the pitch to show his displeasure. "It was the manner in which we lost that was unacceptable," he explains.

Heath cites defeat at Manchester United, 2-0 going on 10-0, as another chastening experience. "It's hard enough going there with your strongest XI but we had several kids in. When they scored early on I thought: 'Oh no, here we go.'"

In between those setbacks, Everton hit rock bottom. "In hindsight, it was a blessing," Kendall says. "If you're fourth bottom, no one ever believes you'll go down. That shocked everyone, made it sink in."

Even though the club have endured frequent scrapes with relegation in recent years, Kendall's latest reign is inevitably compared with his first. "I want to be judged as a newcomer," he insists. "Management isn't about months, or at least it shouldn't be. It's about building something."

The players who have emerged as cornerstones of the reconstruction are a surprising bunch. Who would have imagined, for instance, that Duncan Ferguson could don

Peter Reid's former mantle as captain? In what Heath terms "a masterstroke, typical of his man management", Kendall did.

This, remember, is the striker who attracted the nickname "Duncan Disorderly" and went to prison for butting an opponent. Now he is to marry John Parrott's sister-in-law and is finally showing a sense of responsibility on the park.

Heath describes him as "a true Evertonian". Kendall, who admits the Scot was "fairly ineffective" early in the season, regards his form as "awesome" since the Frenchman Mickael Madar arrived to partner him.

Then there is Nick Barmby, widely written off as another expensive underachiever. Next Tuesday he plays for England B, having caught Glenn Hoddle's eye as a deep-lying attacker. "The graft he puts in in training is incredible," Heath says. "He's turned the situation round himself."

Whereas Ferguson and Barmby cost the previous regime nearly £10m, Kendall has been outspent even by Barnsley. Some supporters claim he was duped into believing Everton would be able to compete for the best. He sums up the situation more diplomatically: "The fans wanted big names. £5m players coming in. We did try for an Ince and a Ravanielli, but it didn't work out."

But, as he points out, the bulk of his most successful side were picked up for comparative peanuts in the lower divisions. He sees Carl Tiler as a modern equivalent. His signing from Sheffield United in November was perceived as proof of Everton's lack of ambition. The critics quickly came round.

Recruiting a young, unknown Norwegian, Thomas Myhre, to replace a legend, Neville Southall, was another example of Kendall having the courage to back his judgement. (At the same time, Liverpool bought Brad Friedel to take over from David James but have not hit the hullet).

He also sold the one Everton man in Hoddle's squad, Andy Hinchcliffe, confident that one of several outstanding teenagers, Michael Ball, will play for England eventually. And when Gary Speed withdrew his labour, after having his head turned by Newcastle, Kendall used the situation to his advantage by confirming the popular Ferguson as acting captain.

With the club's overdraft reportedly running at £12m, it remains to be seen how much of the Hinchcliffe and Speed fees Kendall is allowed to reinvest. In the meantime, he and Heath will continue to impart their passion for Everton to a new generation of players. This is a cause, the junior partner asserts, for which they are ready to sweat blood. No one should doubt that it would be blue.



In step: Howard Kendall (left) and Adrian Heath are shaping Everton's climb out of the relegation zone

Photograph: Simon Wilkinson

Smooth talkers ease pressure on men in the muddle

So, Stevenage were finally put firmly in their place, but to use a phrase beloved of footballers, full credit to them. The non-League side had third-round whipping boys written all over them when they came out of Graham Kelly's hat; as it turned out, whooping boys would have been more appropriate, since they justifiably milked their big moment.

But in my opinion the real losers were Newcastle United, and especially Kenny Dalglish, cast as villain in this footballing soap opera. The episode did neither Dalglish nor his team any favours. Since Kevin Keegan left the Toon, Newcastle, once the nation's champions elect and darlings of the media, have fallen dramatically from grace. Predictable on the pitch, and a manager who has become public enemy No 1 off it; if ever they needed the footballing equivalent of Max Clifford, it is now.

Instead Newcastle have got Dalglish, who is to public relations what Anthea Turner is to marriage guidance. Things might be different were Dalglish able to communicate with the press and public as well as he once could (and probably still can) with a football. That he is now appearing in an advertisement

for the Bristol and West Building Society instead of for BT—like signing for Manchester City from United—says something about his popularity.

In Dalglish's defence, it is not necessarily in a football manager's job description to be an expert in public relations. But while some (like Martin O'Neill, Harry Redknapp and Ron Atkinson) can be relied on for obliging soundbites, others are more likely to bite your head off, and (with Dalglish in particular) it is a case of once bitten, twice shy.

The idea of media training courses for managers has been repeatedly mooted and is something the League Managers' Association is "looking into" (let's hope they finish looking by the time Gerry Francis returns to management). Most managers would no doubt claim they have quite enough on their plates already. Nevertheless, football clubs are no different to any big business in having to work at maintaining their images. After all, they fill more column inches than most, both back and front pages.

For that reason (and not before time, it has to be said) most top clubs now employ a press officer of sorts to "promote their club to the best ef-



OLIVIA
BLAIR
ON
WHY
IT'S GOOD
TO TALK

fect to the most appropriate target audience". Their background vary as much as their remit—some are media trained; others only ever trained on a football pitch, like Rangers' John Greig—but all have, at times, an unenviable task. As Arsenal's press officer, Claire Tomlinson, says: "You can't legislate for what a manager or player might come out with in the heat of the moment. You can't just step into the fray and stop them."

But Paul Mace says that its not the aim of press officers to act as a barrier between managers and players and the press.

Mace has been trying to "build bridges" between Leicester City and the media for six years now, and believes relations are improving. "Managers are getting younger and are more adept at dealing with the press."

That is not to say the press officer has an easier lot these days. Filbert Street's press box used to hold 40 people and was only occasionally full; today, 84 seats are seldom enough. Plus Mace gets at least 12 magazine requests for interviews each week, on top of the daily calls from national, local and international television and radio. "A good press officer can save his manager and players a lot of time," Mace says. "When Matt Elliott got called up by Scotland we were inundated with calls, but we guaranteed the press a time to talk to him and everyone was happy."

According to Mace, there was only a handful of press officers employed by English clubs when he was appointed. Now there are enough to fill a Press Officers' Association, which will meet for the first time in Leicester next Wednesday. It is Mace's brainchild. "There has long been an association for football's commercial managers," he says, "and while ours is still in an

embryonic state it's an opportunity for press officers to meet on a regular basis to swap notes and try to help one another. The job's big enough, for heaven's sake."

Which is exactly what the Football Association and Premier League must have realised when they expanded their respective PR departments. It took Graham Taylor and non-qualification for USA '94 to convince the FA of the need for a director of public affairs—the ubiquitous David Davies—while the Premier League's press department only came into being in 1995, three years after the League's inception. Before that it was just one man and his phone.

But while press officers may have improved relations between managers and the media significantly since Cardiff's Kenny Hibbit barked to the assembling press after his side's FA Cup win over Rotherham & Diamonds in 1995, "Look at you lot, you're sick as pigs. You're only here because you thought they were going to knock us out", it is doubtful whether if even the most smooth-talking press officer will ever be able to persuade the likes of Kenny Dalglish that it is good to talk—talk cordially.

Speed completes his £5.5m transfer to Newcastle

Newcastle completed the signing of the Everton midfielder Gary Speed yesterday in a deal believed to be worth £5.5m. The Welsh international is eligible for the Magpies' Premiership game at St James' Park against West Ham today.

The 28-year-old former Leeds United player is the fourth Newcastle signing in the last week and a half, as the Newcastle United manager, Kenny Dalglish, reinforces his squad for an assault on both the FA Cup and a European place in the Premiership.

The minister for sport, Tony Banks, has rejected overwhelming calls by fans for a return to terracing. The vast majority of supporters at Thursday night's Manchester roadshow of the Government's Football Task Force voiced their backing for the right to stand at matches.

But the issue is not within the remit of the Task Force and Banks says the terraces will not return. A spokesman for Banks said that safety is the overriding reason why they are against standing at matches.

"Tony Banks understands the feelings that there are, but the truth is that everyone understands the reasons why Lord Justice Taylor recommended all-seater grounds," he said.

Police are nearing the end of their investigation into Arsenal striker Ian Wright's alleged outburst at fans following the club's 3-1 home defeat by Blackburn back in December. Scotland Yard have taken statements from fans who were at the game on December 13 but denied a report that they were now ready to submit a file on the case to the Crown Prosecution Service, who will then decide whether there is enough evidence to bring charges against Wright.

Police said that "several lines of inquiry" were still being followed up, with witnesses being encouraged to come forward even at this relatively late stage. Wright is alleged to have launched a tirade of abuse at supporters from the window of the team's dressing-room following the game.

Wimbledon have been given a boost in their bid to move to Dublin by European Union officials. The Dons, whose proposed move is being resisted by the Football Association of Ireland, have gone to the EU to ask whether they are entitled to relocate in Dublin.

Willy Hella, a spokesman for the EU Commissioner of Competitions Karel Van Miert, said: "As a prima facie case, the European Union would have no objections to the move."

Mario Zagallo, the Brazilian national coach, remained in bullish mood despite another embarrassing night for Brazil in the CONCACAF Gold Cup at the Orange Bowl. The world champions were held to a 1-1 draw by Guatemala on Thursday.

Juan Carlos Plata grabbed a dramatic injury-time equaliser after the Brazil captain, Romario, had opened the scoring from the penalty spot.

It means Brazil have yet to chalk up a victory in the competition after being held to a 0-0 draw by Jamaica on Tuesday.

"We didn't play very well tonight, Tuesday was better for us," Zagallo said. "There were a lot of errors in our passing. We made mistakes tonight but let's not forget that we have lost only one of our last 56 games."

Romario made the breakthrough in the 78th minute with a superb penalty into the corner of the goal after he had been bundled over by Engelvert Herrera.

But Guatemala, who played out another goalless draw last Sunday, against El Salvador in Los Angeles, hit back with Plata heading the equaliser after skipper Machon drove in a corner.

هنا من الأصل

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Leicester held themselves up against Manchester United last week and came away fully satisfied - now the trick is doing it again. Only Coventry have avoided defeat in the match following a win over the champions and Leeds, today's visitors to Filbert Street, are among those who climbed the mountain only to fall down the other side.

Coventry are also on their way to scaling another peak, reaching safety before the situation becomes desperate. They meet Sheffield Wednesday at Highfield Road on the back of successive wins and might be 11th by tomorrow morning. What their supporters will do without their springtime dose of relegation fear is anyone's guess.

Leicester captain Steve Walsh is doubtful with a groin strain and Spencer Prior stands by to replace him. Greek international Theo Zagorakis is expected to sign a £750,000 midweek signing from PAOK Salonika, is expected to be on the bench. Leicester's 1-0 win against Manchester United last week at old Trafford not only gave the Premiership title challenger some hope, but also brought an indifferent period of Leicester Premiership form to an end. Prior to last week, they had drawn three and lost three of their previous six games.

Leeds have Robert Molenaar out with a twisted ankle and Luca Radebe is on African Nations' Cup duty with South Africa. With Radebe away, Gunnar Halle is expected to fill the central defensive vacancy alongside David Wetherall. Midfielder Alfie Haland should have recovered from the foot injury that prevented him from playing in the reserves in midweek and might make his first start in a month. Striker Derek Riley, who has been an almost permanent substitute this season, is definitely out after a hernia operation.

Chelsea, however, have a good overall record in London derbies. In the first five Premiership seasons they took an average of 1.6 points from each London derby, compared with 1.3 from other Premiership games. This season the difference is even greater, with averages of 2.2 and 1.7 respectively.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pos
Chelsea	6	4	1	1	16	6	13
West Ham	7	4	0	3	12	11	12
Arsenal	5	2	3	0	8	3	9
C Palace	5	2	1	2	3	7	7
Leeds United	7	1	3	3	4	10	6
Wimbledon	6	0	2	4	3	9	2

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Arsenal (9)	8	4	3	1	15	8	15
Wimbledon (8)	8	4	2	2	11	7	14
Chelsea (6)	8	4	1	3	16	16	13
Tottenham (10)	8	2	1	5	8	13	7
West Ham (14)	8	2	1	5	10	16	

London derbies				Other Premiership matches			
Season	Matches	Draws	Percentage	Matches	Draws	Percentage	
1992-93	31	10	33	432	120	28	
1993-94	30	12	40	432	130	30	
1994-95	42	13	31	420	121	29	
1995-96	30	9	30	350	89	25	
1996-97	20	4	20	360	115	32	
1997-98	18	5	23	221	56	25	
TOTAL	170	53	31	2215	631	28	

	Home											Away											Form (last result on right)	Upcoming matches
	P	Pts	GD	W	D	L	F	A	W	D	L	F	A											
1 Arsenal	24	49	+33	10	1	1	32	5	5	3	4	19	12	WWLWL	11 Feb Aston Villa (H); 21 Feb Derby (A); 24 Feb Chelsea (H); 25 Feb QPR (H)									
2 Chelsea	24	45	+27	8	2	1	22	8	6	1	6	30	17	DLWLW	11 Feb Arsenal (A); 28 Feb Aston Villa (H); 8 Mar Aston Villa (H); 11 Mar Crystal Palace (H)									
3 Blackburn	24	43	+20	8	3	1	30	12	4	2	3	17	11	DLWLW	21 Feb Southampton (A); 28 Feb Liverpool (H); 1 Mar Tottenham (A)									
4 Liverpool	24	45	+20	9	1	3	26	10	4	5	2	13	9	WWWDWD	14 Feb Sheffield Wed (A); 23 Feb Everton (H); 25 Feb Southampton (A); 7 Mar Liverpool (H)									
5 Manchester United	24	41	+16	8	2	2	24	9	3	6	4	16	17	WWLWL	21 Feb Crystal Palace (H); 24 Feb Bolton (A); 25 Feb Tottenham (A); 7 Mar Liverpool (H)									
6 Derby	24	39	+9	9	3	0	25	7	2	3	7	14	23	WLWLW	11 Feb Everton (A); 21 Feb Man Utd (A); 28 Feb Sheffield Wed (H); 7 Mar Arsenal (A)									
7 Tottenham	24	38	+7	5	3	4	17	14	6	7	4	17	18	LDLWL	23 Feb Newcastle (H); 28 Feb Southampton (A); 7 Mar Tottenham (H)									
8 West Ham	24	35	+1	9	1	1	26	8	2	1	10	10	27	WWWWL	21 Feb Bolton (A); 2 Mar Arsenal (H); 7 Mar Crystal Palace (A); 11 Mar Man Utd (H)									
9 Manchester City	24	31	-5	1	2	5	8	11	2	1	4	14	10	LDLWL	11 Feb Tottenham (H); 21 Feb QPR (A); 24 Feb Arsenal (H); 25 Feb Tottenham (H)									
10 Newcastle	24	32	-4	6	3	4	5	14	3	2	6	10	5	LLWLW	29 Feb Leeds (H); 28 Feb Everton (A); 7 Mar Leicester (A); 14 Mar Coventry (H)									
11 Sheffield Wed	24	30	-6	4	2	4	21	19	2	3	5	16	28	DLWWD	14 Feb Wimbledon (H); 21 Feb Tottenham (H); 28 Feb Reading (H); 7 Mar Man Utd (H)									
12 Southampton	24	28	-7	7	1	4	19	11	1	3	8	7	19	WDWWL	11 Feb Coventry (H); 21 Feb Bolton (H); 28 Feb Leeds (A); 7 Mar Everton (A)									
13 Coventry	24	27	-8	4	4	1	18	16	2	2	3	9	20	WLWLW	21 Feb Derby (A); 24 Feb Bolton (A); 25 Feb Tottenham (A); 7 Mar Southampton (H)									
14 Everton	24	27	-7	5	2	4	17	16	2	4	7	11	21	LWYWW	11 Feb Derby (H); 23 Feb Liverpool (A); 28 Feb Bolton (H); 7 Mar Southampton (A)									
15 Aston Villa	24	22	-12	5	5	3	14	22	2	3	3	10	11	LDLWL	11 Feb Bolton (H); 24 Feb Tottenham (A); 25 Feb Liverpool (A); 28 Feb Aston Villa (H)									
16 Wimbledon	23	26	-5	3	3	6	12	16	3	5	3	10	11	DDLDD	Monday Crystal Palace (A); 21 Feb Aston Villa (H); 28 Feb Barnsley (A); 7 Mar Coventry (A)									
17 Bolton	24	23	-8	4	4	1	17	20	5	4	4	14	14	BDLWL	Monday Walsley (A); 21 Feb Bolton (A); 28 Feb Bolton (A); 7 Mar Bolton (A)									
18 Tottenham	24	23	-20	5	3	4	8	15	1	2	9	8	26	WLDLWL	11 Feb Leicester (H); 21 Feb Sheffield Wed (A); 1 Mar Bolton (H); 7 Mar Leeds (A)									
19 Bournemouth	24	20	-19	4	3	1	10	17	2	3	8	11	20	LDLDD	21 Feb Barnsley (H); 24 Feb Southampton (A); 25 Feb Tottenham (A); 7 Mar Bolton (H)									
20 Barnsley	24	21	-39	4	2	5	12	20	2	1	10	8	39	LDLWL	21 Feb Coventry (A); 28 Feb Wimbledon (H); 7 Mar Bournemouth (A); 14 Mar Southampton (H)									

Steve McManaman will maintain his Liverpool even-present record this season by shaking off a hamstring injury to face Southampton. Roy Evans expects McManaman to be declared fit for today and for England's match with Chile on Wednesday. Liverpool have minor injury doubts over Robbie Fowler (back) and Phil Babb (hamstring), while Jamie Redknapp has already started light training after his cartilage operation and should be back in three weeks. Jason McAteer faces two months out with his broken leg, and Rob Jones will deputise. Southampton will give an immediate debut to John Beresford, who completed his move from Newcastle yesterday and goes straight into the side. Beresford will play left-back in place of Lee Todd. Kevin Davies is struggling to recover from an ankle injury which forced him to miss last weekend's 3-0 defeat at Arsenal. Former England midfielder player Carlton Palmer and defender Francis Benali are both suspended as they serve three-match bans while Australian international Robbie Slater is ruled out by a hamstring injury.

Henning Berg is likely to return to Manchester United's defence as fellow Norwegian Ronny Johnsen is out with a calf strain. Scottish midfielder Brian McClair is also poised for a rare start as England international Nidy Butt is suspended. The champions have lost three of their last four matches and have seen their lead at the top of the Premiership cut to four points. The match will be overshadowed by the commemorations to mark the 40th anniversary of the Munich air crash. Kick-off has been put back 15 minutes to allow for one minute's silence at 3.04pm, which was the time of the disaster, while wreaths will be laid in the centre circle.

Striker Dean Holdsworth is likely to return for Bolton for the first time since injuring his calf two months ago. Icelandic forward Arnar Gunnlaugsson is away on international duty as is South African defender Mark Fish. Midfielder Alan Thompson and captain Gudni Bergsson are both available after two-match suspensions, although the latter is nursing an ankle injury and rated doubtful.

Gary Speed, Newcastle's new £5.5m recruit, is one of three recent signings in the squad. Speed is likely to start along with Andreas Andersson while former Stoks full-back Andy Griffin will also play some part in the match. Steve Watson is out with a broken foot, while Temuri Ketsbaia is on international duty with Georgia. With the perils of facing Stevenage in the FA Cup now firmly behind them, and with Alan Shearer's return confirmed by three goals, Newcastle will be hoping for an upturn in their fortunes.

West Ham's Paul Kitson is hoping to return from a groin injury to face his old club but may have to settle for a place on the bench, with Trevor Sinclair once more partnering John Hartson up front. Andy Impey (groin) also returns, and goalkeeper Bernard Lama is fit again. Samson Abou is still suspended. Frank Lampard, named in the England B squad this week, pulled out of today's squad with a virus. West Ham have won just seven points from a possible 39 so far this season on their travels, but six of those came from recent games.

Arsenal will give a fitness test to England striker Ian Wright tomorrow before deciding whether he is fit enough to make it at least on to the bench. The striker returned to training with Arsenal yesterday following a spell at a clinic in the South of France to clear up a hamstring injury. Lee Dixon returns to the starting line-up but Martin Keown and David Seaman are injured, and midfielder Patrick Vieira is suspended.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40	41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76	77	78	79	80	81	82	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99	100	101	102	103	104	105	106	107	108	109	110	111	112	113	114	115	116	117	118	119	120	121	122	123	124	125	126	127	128	129	130	131	132	133	134	135	136	137	138	139	140	141	142	143	144	145	146	147	148	149	150	151	152	153	154	155	156	157	158	159	160	161	162	163	164	165	166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180	181	182	183	184	185	186	187	188	189	190	191	192	193	194	195	196	197	198	199	200	201	202	203	204	205	206	207	208	209	210	211	212	213	214	215	216	217	218	219	220	221	222	223	224	225	226	227	228	229	230	231	232	233	234	235	236	237	238	239	240	241	242	243	244	245	246	247	248	249	250	251	252	253	254	255	256	257	258	259	260	261	262	263	264	265	266	267	268	269	270	271	272	273	274	275	276	277	278	279	280	281	282	283	284	285	286	287	288	289	290	291	292	293	294	295	296	297	298	299	300	301	302	303	304	305	306	307	308	309	310	311	312	313	314	315	316	317	318	319	320	321	322	323	324	325	326	327	328	329	330	331	332	333	334	335	336	337	338	339	340	341	342	343	344	345	346	347	348	349	350	351	352	353	354	355	356	357	358	359	360	361	362	363	364	365	366	367	368	369	370	371	372	373	374	375	376	377	378	379	380	381	382	383	384	385	386	387	388	389	390	391	392	393	394	395	396	397	398	399	400	401	402	403	404	405	406	407	408	409	410	411	412	413	414	415	416	417	418	419	420	421	422	423	424	425	426	427	428	429	430	431	432	433	434	435	436	437	438	439	440	441	442	443	444	445	446	447	448	449	450	451	452	453	454	455	456	457	458	459	460	461	462	463	464	465	466	467	468	469	470	471	472	473	474	475	476	477	478	479	480	481	482	483	484	485	486	487	488	489	490	491	492	493	494	495	496	497	498	499	500	501	502	503	504	505	506	507	508	509	510	511	512	513	514	515	516	517	518	519	520	521	522	523	524	525	526	527	528	529	530	531	532	533	534	535	536	537	538	539	540	541	542	543	544	545	546	547	548	549	550	551	552	553	554	555	556	557	558	559	560	561	562	563	564	565	566	567	568	569	570	571	572	573	574	575	576	577	578	579	580	581	582	583	584	585	586	587	588	589	590	591	592	593	594	595	596	597	598	599	600	601	602	603	604	605	606	607	608	609	610	611	612	613	614	615	616	617	618	619	620	621	622	623	624	625	626	627	628	629	630	631	632	633	634	635	636	637	638	639	640	641	642	643	644	645	646	647	648	649	650	651	652	653	654	655	656	657	658	659	660	661	662	663	664	665	666	667	668	669	670	671	672	673	674	675	676	677	678	679	680	681	682	683	684	685	686	687	688	689	690	691	692	693	694	695	696	697	698	699	700	701	702	703	704	705	706	707	708	709	710	711	712	713	714	715	716	717	718	719	720	721	722	723	724	725	726	727	728	729	730	731	732	733	734	735	736	737	738	739	740	741	742	743	744	745	746	747	748	749	750	751	752	753	754	755	756	757	758	759	760	761	762	763	764	765	766	767	768	769	770	771	772	773	774	775	776	777	778	779	780	781	782	783	784	785	786	787	788	789	790	791	792	793	794	795	796	797	798	799	800	801	802	803	804	805	806	807	808	809	810	811	812	813	814	815	816	817	818	819	820	821	822	823	824	825	826	827	828	829	830	831	832	833	834	835	836	837	838	839	840	841	842	843	844	845	846	847	848	849	850	851	852	853	854	855	856	857	858	859	860	861	862	863	864	865	866	867	868	869	870	871	872	873	874	875	876	877	878	879	880	881	882	883	884	885	886	887	888	889	890	891	892	893	894	895	896	897	898	899	900	901	902	903	904	905	906	907	908	909	910	911	912	913	914	915	916	917	918	919	920	921	922	923	924	925	926	927	928	929	930	931	932	933	934	935	936	937	938	939	940	941	942	943	944	945	946	947	948	949	950	951	952	953	954	955	956	957	958	959	960	961	962	963	964	965	966	967	968	969	970	971	972	973	974	975	976	977	978	979	980	981	982	983	984	985	986	987	988	989	990	991	992	993	994	995	996	997	998	999	1000
1	Pol	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																															

		P	5	1	Pts	Avg
1	Coventry	24	5	51	76	317
2	Everton	24	3	50	65	271
3	Bolton	24	4	44	64	267
4	Leeds	24	3	39	64	264
5	Chelsea	24	3	47	62	258
6	Arsenal	24	2	50	60	250
7	Sheff Wed	24	3	42	57	238
8	Derby	25	1	54	59	236
9	C Palace	25	2	48	58	232
10	Blackburn	24	3	38	53	221
11	Newcastle	24	2	40	50	208
12	West Ham	25	2	41	51	204
13	Soton	24	1	41	46	192
14	Man Utd	24	0	40	40	167
15	Liverpool	24	1	33	38	158
16	Barnsley	24	0	38	38	158
17	Wimbledon	25	1	34	39	156
18	Tottenham	24	1	30	35	146
19	Leicester	24	1	29	34	142
20	A Villa	24	1	27	32	133



SPORT

Saturday 7 February 1998

CRICKET: SECOND TEST

Fraser strikes as England build on Hussain's heroics

Derek Pringle
reports from Port of Spain,
Trinidad
England 214;
West Indies 63-3

It is not often that you get to hail a brave rearguard performance by an England team against the West Indies, but yesterday's efforts by Nasser Hussain, unbeaten on 61, and Angus Fraser, equal third-highest scorer on 17, were every bit as gripping as the ones portrayed by Stanley Baker and Michael Caine at Rorke's Drift.

Coming together the previous evening, the pair added 42 precious runs on a spiteful pitch before Kenny Benjamin coded the innings on 214 with two wickets in successive balls.

In all, the pair batted together for 98 minutes to ensure a total in excess of 200, a benchmark that may yet prove to be highly competitive. It was the longest period of play in the match in which a wicket did not fall, exceeding by some 40 minutes the entire duration of last week's first Test at Sabina Park.

But if the pitch here was an improvement on that one, it was far from being the better the authorities here were promising before the start, and so far the ball has bounced indifferently and seamed from both ends.

Such conditions are never easy for batsmen and it left Hussain with the tricky dilemma of trying to advance the score without over exposing Fraser.

Whatever the initial plan hatched before play began, it was probably amended once the first ball of the day had cannoned off Fraser's helmet to Stuart Williams at third slip. Following such a rude wake-up call, the pair decided to take whatever runs were forthcoming.

With a defensive field making runs difficult for Hussain, any advance was going to be slow and painful and the tall Middlesex bowler had to take his fair share of bruises in the process.

But if Fraser, a limited but competent batsman, excelled through a combination of brave defence and squirted singles, Hussain was outstanding, particularly in his dogged refusal to be cowed by the relentless barrage of fast bowling.

Apart from the steely mind and an unbending will needed on sporting pitches, Hussain has the facility of making late, wristy adjustments to his shot. When the ball is doing the unpredictable, it is an invaluable gift, especially when the ball needs to be manoeuvred around rather than struck as the textbook dictates.

Patience, too, is a key, though it is doubtful whether England's vice-captain, who spent more than six hours at the crease, would have been quite so composed had Fraser not looked so able at the other end. Mixing sturdy defence with cleverly placed singles, Hussain had to wait until the first ball of

the 18th over, bowled by Carl Hooper, before collecting his first boundary of the morning.

What he casual viewer may not appreciate is that while the pitch was not lethal or particularly quick, no two balls behaved in the same way. It was an inconsistency borne out by some remarkable bowling analyses and considering that he bowled well within himself, Curtly Ambrose was flattered by his figures of 26-16-23-3. Not so his Antiguan team-mate Benjamin, who by removing Fraser and Phil Tufnell on a hat-trick in England's second innings.

Having opened yesterday's proceedings from the Pavilion End, it was not until Brian Lara switched Benjamin to the other end that he managed the breakthrough. But as so often happens against the West Indies when one wicket goes after a stand, others quickly follow, though the ball that first greeted Tufnell would have tested far more illustrious batsmen.

When England bowled, both Andrew Caddick and Dean Headley initially fell into the trap that tends to afflict English bowlers in the Caribbean. In-

stead of letting the pitch do the work, as Ambrose had done, they got drawn into adopting the roughhouse treatment meted out by the likes of Benjamin and Nixon McLean.

When Australia won the series here three years ago, their pacemen bowled a disciplined line and length, reserving the short stuff exclusively for the West Indies bowlers, who did not like it one jot.

After a fallow 10 overs, albeit a period where Sherwin Campbell was almost decapitated by a good length ball from Caddick, the penny at last appeared to drop. Being mainly backfoot players, the home side's batsmen hate to be brought forward, which is what Campbell should have been when he edged Headley to Jack Russell, who took a tumbling catch.

The dismissal heralded the moment the home crowd had been waiting for, and Lara, made his entrance to a coach shell fanfare. Beginning cautiously, the languidity of old did not take long to resurface and the West Indies captain soon reached double figures with some neat clips off his legs.

However, Lara was soon embroiled in a sharp exchange with Michael Atherton, his England counterpart, after a catch claimed by Russell off Williams had been adjudged by the third umpire not to have carried.

Williams had added a further six runs when Atherton was again in the action, this time catching the batsman's leading edge as he tried to whip Fraser to leg. Five balls later the West Indies began to totter when Fraser added to his tally by bowling Carl Hooper behind his legs for one, the right-hander's feet having gone too far across his crease.

Tony Cozier, page 19



Nasser Hussain takes evasive action from a ball from Curtly Ambrose yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

PORT OF SPAIN SCOREBOARD

England won toss
ENGLAND - First Innings
(Overnight: 175 for 8)
N Hussain not out 61
61.5 min, 202 balls, 4 fours
A R C Fraser & D Williams
A R C Fraser 17
108 min, 69 balls, 1 four
P C H Tufnell & Lara b Benjamin 214
Fall (over): 9-214 (Fraser)
Bowling: Walsh 27-7-55-1 (nb2)
(6-2-13-0, 8-5-12-0, 7-0-23-1, 5-0-7-0)
Ambrose 26-16-23-3 (nb2) (5-3-4-0)
3-1-3-1, 7-5-8-1, 11-7-5-0; McLean
19-7-28-1 (nb6) (6-2-13-0, 2-0-5-0,
3-1-4-0, 6-4-3-1, 2-0-3-0); Benjamin
24-5-28-9 (nb3) (2-0-13-0, 11-3-20-1,
9-1-0-0, 1-1-0-2; Hooper 9-3-14-1,
1-1-0-0, 4-1-5-1, 2-1-1-0, 2-0-8-0);

Adams 3-0-8-0 (nb1) (1-0-4-0,
2-0-4-0); Chandrasekhar 1-0-2-0,
Progress: Second day: 200: 458 min,
2014 overs, 1113 balls, 1133 runs
WEST INDIES - First Innings
S L Campbell & Russell
S L Campbell 1
108 min, 69 balls, 1 four
P C H Tufnell & Lara b Benjamin 214
Fall (over): 9-214 (Fraser)
Bowling: Walsh 27-7-55-1 (nb2)
(6-2-13-0, 8-5-12-0, 7-0-23-1, 5-0-7-0)
Ambrose 26-16-23-3 (nb2) (5-3-4-0)
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19-7-28-1 (nb6) (6-2-13-0, 2-0-5-0,
3-1-4-0, 6-4-3-1, 2-0-3-0); Benjamin
24-5-28-9 (nb3) (2-0-13-0, 11-3-20-1,
9-1-0-0, 1-1-0-2; Hooper 9-3-14-1,
1-1-0-0, 4-1-5-1, 2-1-1-0, 2-0-8-0);

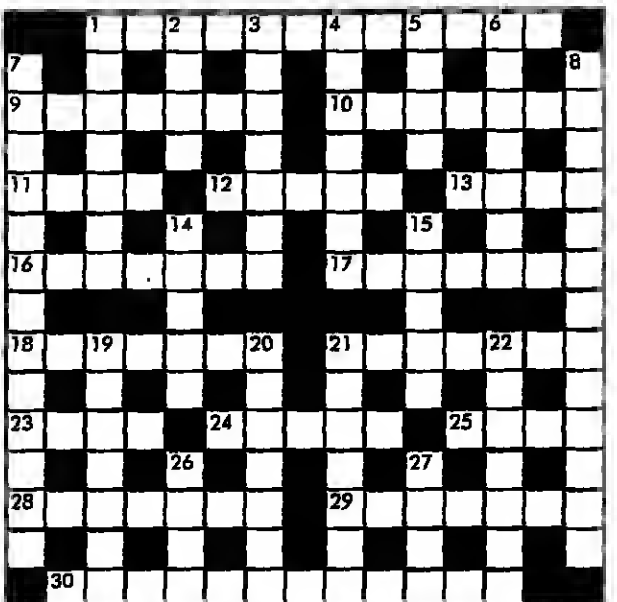
THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3528, Saturday 7 February

By Spuris

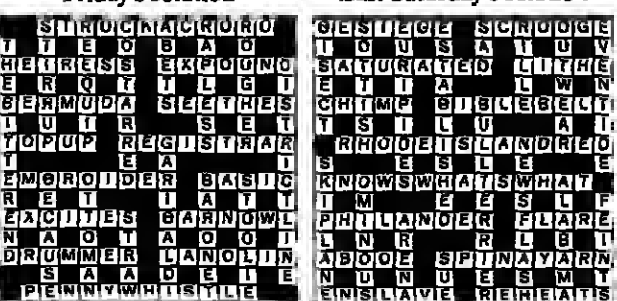
ACROSS

DOWN



Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution



- 1 He won't be the first to be dismissed (6, 6)
- 9 Prickly rawness returns (7)
- 10 Instrument in court case originally seen in Merchant of Venice (7)
- 11 Back in power, government increased in strength (4)
- 12 Flag, and person holding it? (5)
- 13 A help when taking deep breaths? (4)
- 16 Very keen tennis player by oriental (7)
- 17 Lean youngster consumes dairy product (7)
- 18 Adult class infiltrated by extremists from Wigan (5-2)
- 21 Game in which we see one article after another concealed by players (7)
- 23 Deity's diminished authority (4)
- 24 Mischievous girl initially prey to deceiver (5)
- 25 Examination concerned with poetry, not history (4)
- 28 Force detaining rotter in course of criminal investigation (7)
- 29 Going off music? (7)
- 30 Even-handed? (12)

- 1 North American broadcast about Cuba's just beginning (7)
- 2 Attitude that is found in Merchant Navy (4)
- 3 Trap poor Ann's landed in before (7)
- 4 Ruler seems relaxed about public relations (7)
- 5 Every English hospital keeps an account (4)
- 6 Selfish person is to get punished (7)
- 7 Breed of hyena? (8-5)
- 8 Where they're apt to be rolling in the aisles? (7-6)
- 14 Vacuous academician appears in middle of dinner (5)
- 15 Notices in libraries slightly overlapping? (5)
- 19 Partner's problem, having quietly eliminated small furry creature? (7)
- 20 Poet, half German, turns out to be one with wealthy patron (7)
- 21 Conscientious objector at university permitted to produce a little poetry (7)
- 22 In Prussia unfortunately one missed start of solar eclipse (7)
- 26 Presenters of nativity plays (4)
- 27 Singer appearing in the nude - get her off (4)

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hardback copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: T. Squires, Colchester; P. B. Bowers, Dorchester; C. McCook, Woking; V. Haddock, Croydon; A. Cowley, Kellogg.

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Saturday 7 February 1998
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England's overnight pair hold ground to breach vital barrier

It would be impossible to give too much credit to Angus Fraser for the way in which he kept the West Indian fast bowlers at bay for the first 80 minutes play on the second morning.

He was a most dependable partner for Nasser Hussain and enabled England to take their score past 200, which was psychologically so important.

Although it may sound ridiculous to the uninitiated there is all the difference in the world between being bowled out for, say,

HENRY BLOFELD

193 than it is to finish with 214, far more than just 21 runs. A score of more than 200 has a infinitely more solid ring to it.

Fraser is an admirable cricketer and his gutsy performance was no more than one would have expected. In the first over of the day, he tried to duck to a Kenny Benjamin bouncer which struck him on the helmet and two overs later he ducked

again and ball flew off his body for four leg byes.

But Fraser just gritted his teeth and got on with it. Many times in defence, Fraser played the ball with both feet off the ground and there was something splendidly defiant and heroic about his batting. It had "England expects..." written all over it.

Hussain was no less impressive. Even if he was a bit more like a jack-in-a-box in his movement. One moment, he was up

on his toes dancing away to leg as the ball lifted; the next, as he played one which kept low, he ended up squatting anxiously on his haunches and holding the pose for a second or two.

Then, he would try and glance a ball to fine leg full away to the off side and miss it altogether. He would scratch the ground in irritation and walk quickly round the stumps, trying to dissipate all that nervous energy. But he stuck it out, never trying to hit his way out of it.

RUGBY UNION: FIVE NATIONS' CHAMPIONSHIP

Blighty's mighty blowers save France's big day

Never in doubt, as they say in all the best rugby circles. The truth, of course, is that today's Five Nations collision between France and England in front of a record 80,000 crowd was very much in doubt, thanks to the peculiar and cringingly embarrassing problems surrounding the frost-bound playing surface at the new Stade de France in the north of Paris.

Only the best efforts of a rustic band of sporting horticulturalists from dear old Blighty managed to save the showpiece fixture. David Powell, best known as a bruising England

prop of the late 1960s, and Nigel Felton, a former opening batsman with Somerset and Northamptonshire, thawed the previously uncovered pitch by wrapping it in a protective blanket and slow-roasting it with dozens of heaters, burners and hot-air blowers for three anxious days. "We've used up 500 gallons of diesel, but it's worked," Powell said.

Whether the ingenuity of Les Rois will work to England's advantage remains to be seen, but Clive Woodward, the England coach, and his party gave the surface their seal of approval on arrival at the stadium yesterday. "It's perfect," he said. "I have no problem whatsoever with either the pitch or the facilities."

There may be problems

ahead for the French, though. The emergency heat treatment carried out on the playing area has left the grass in poor shape - a curious brown colour, sparse in places and almost seared in others.

Stadium officials must now decide whether to relay the pitch ahead of this summer's football World Cup. The further damage caused this afternoon by approximately 270 tonnes of French and English forward beef should help them make up their minds.

- Chris Hewett, Paris
Danger signals, page 18

ELEVEN PAGES OF SPORT
BEGIN ON PAGE 14

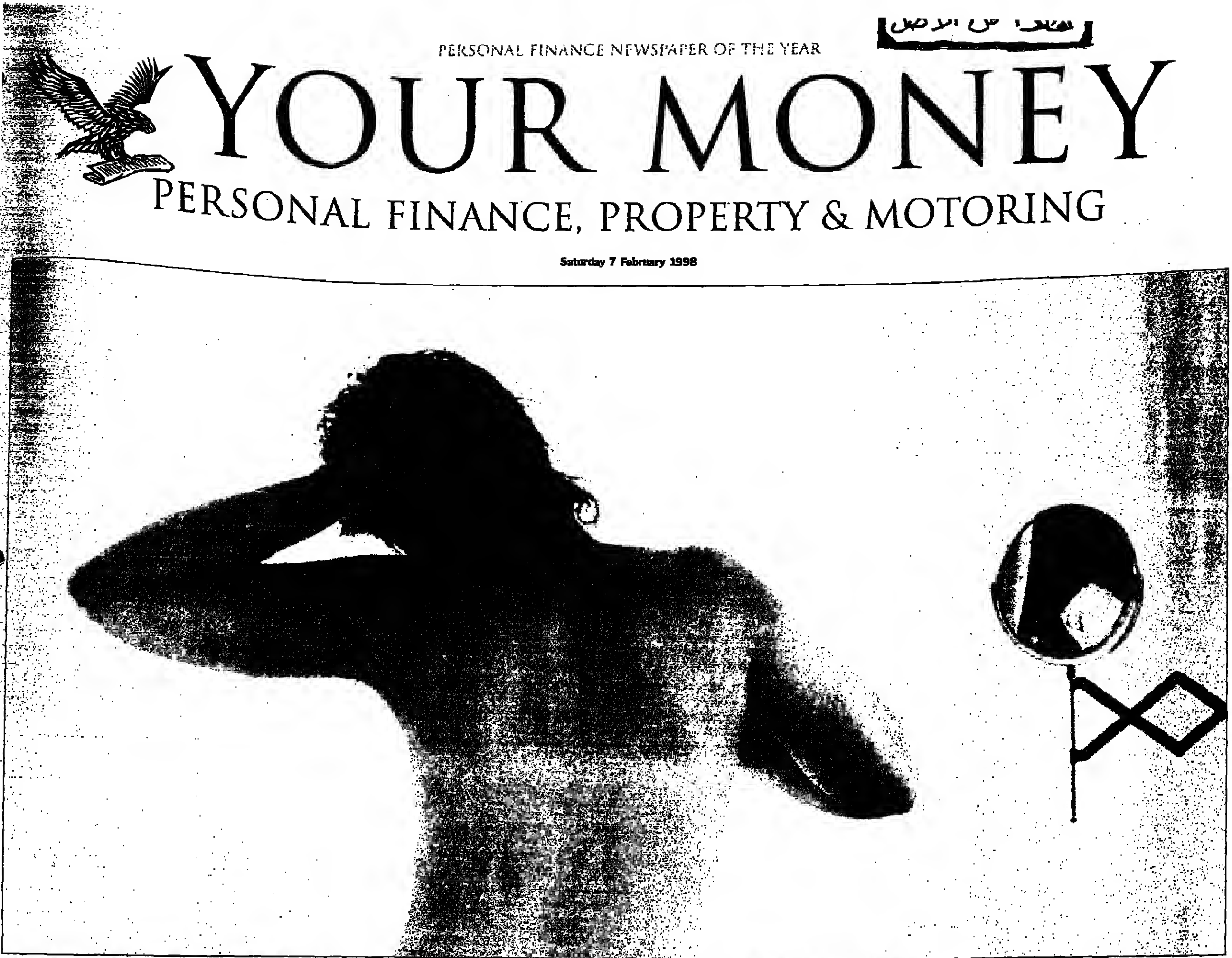
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هنا من الأصل



Examine your options: Insurance products targeted at women often do not give as good value as others marketed to men as well, which can cover a far wider range of illnesses

Photograph: John Lawrence

After illness strikes, the financial blow follows

Many tens of thousands of women are diagnosed each year as having cancer, 21,000 in England and Wales involving breast tumours. The good news is that increasing numbers of women survive the disease. But, as Iain Morse writes, the financial problems caused by cancer can linger on for just as long as the illness itself.

It's the moment every woman dreads when that casual breast examination in the bathroom reveals a small lump or when a hospital consultant calls you at home and asks to see you immediately after a routine cervical scan.

For Joan Henson, a medical receptionist, the diagnosis came at a particularly poignant moment: "I was told I had breast cancer on Christmas Eve one year ago. It's a horrible experience. I sat in church on Christmas Day, surrounded by happy people and just felt so isolated. Cancer is very frightening. It feels like a death sentence."

A million miles away from Joan Henson's personal anguish, insurance underwriters and actuaries also weigh

up the odds of life and death after diagnosis. Their statistics show breast cancer in particular accounts for 10.6 per cent of all female cancers and 9.5 per cent of cancer deaths overall, while cervical cancer accounts for 2.6 per cent of tumours. What is more, the reported incidence of cancer in women under 35 is also increasing.

This is not all grim news: a spokeswoman for the Imperial Cancer Research Fund points out that a large reason for the increase in cancers being diagnosed is actually because of the success of screening programmes throughout the UK: "The incidence of cancer may be rising, but deaths from cancer are decreasing," she says.

The statistics suggest she is right: 62 per cent of women with breast cancer survive five years or more, of which 84 per cent of those diagnosed early survive for longer compared with 18 per cent of those where it is only picked up at an advanced stage. Some 58 per cent of women with cervical cancer and 70 per cent of those with ovarian cancer live more than five years after diagnosis. With ovarian

But for many women, survival is not enough. Paul Cooper, a principal

underwriter at insurers Swiss Re, says, "Many more people survive serious illness than previously, while some can be cured completely. But the consequences of these illnesses are lifestyle-threatening. They can include loss of earnings (or even) early retirement."

Joan Henson, 52, is "lucky" in that regard: "I'm not well off, but something had made me keep my private medical insurance. This paid for immediate treatment at the Royal Marsden; I went in the day after that New Year. One of the worst aspects of cancer is having to wait for treatment. You feel the disease could spread at any time. But I didn't have to wait. Norwich Union covers my medical bill and the total must be well over £20,000."

Fear of financial loss after cancer strikes has meant that in addition to traditional life insurance, where cash is paid to dependents on death, there has also been a huge increase in sales of policies which pay out lump sums on diagnosis of a range of tumours, plus a range of other critical illnesses including strokes, heart attacks and similar.

The costs of such policies depends on a variety of factors, Mr Cooper says: "Normal factors like age, and occupation, but primarily with regard

to family history and smoker status.

"Family history is a strong indicator; if your mother suffered breast cancer in her 30s and 40s, the cost of the policy will probably go up to reflect this. Sadly, some women with this family history seem to avoid screening for early detection, despite needing it more than lower-risk groups."

In recent years, a handful of insurers have entered the "women's market", including one company, AIG, which offers a Well Woman policy covering against seven female-only cancers. For premiums of £5.85 a month a 30-year-old woman would receive £6,000 on diagnosis, £3,000 for surgery, £500 a month for two years, plus £100 a day for the first 100 days in hospital.

However, Fiona Price, a London independent financial adviser specialising in advising women, warns: "Insurers wrap products up with a pink bow and try to sell them on fear. The message is that these products often do not give good value as other ones marketed to both men and women, which cover a far wider range of illnesses at little or no extra cost."

Melanie Reid, aged 30, bears out Ms Price's comments. While her insurance policy made a huge difference, her cancer could just as easily

have been contracted by a man. She says: "My husband started a policy a few years ago to cover him at work. Lois our daughter, fell ill with E-coli, a severe stomach infection, which damaged her kidneys and meant she needed dialysis. The policy covered her and paid out £15,000."

We were under a terrible weight and worried about what would happen if I couldn't take care of Lois. Both of us had been off work and were struggling to keep up the mortgage. But then, on top of the first payment, we received \$55,000 against my condition.

"This money has been a real source of comfort. We've used some to help modify the house for Lois and can afford treats we couldn't afford before."

Cover against multiple illnesses is often better value, as two contracts by market leaders Skandia and Allied Dunbar demonstrate. Skandia's Lifetime Plan, offers cover of £100,000 at a monthly premium of only £18.22 to a non-smoking woman aged 30 over a 30-year term.

Allied Dunbar's Protection Plan offers the same level of cover £100,000 but at a higher cost of

\$44.95 per month. However, this is a whole of life policy (that is, indefinite) rather than for a specific term, includes waiver of contribution, and allows both premium and benefit to rise in line with inflation. It also includes life insurance to the same value.

Most insurers charge women at least marginally less than men of the same age, for the same level of cover. But there are signs that some big players in the market are moving toward equalisation of premiums. According to Mr Cooper, this reflects the fact that as "women move into the workplace, they are taking not just the same jobs as men, but the same stress-related rates of illness".

Whether financially affected or not, for those who are diagnosed as suffering cancer, life will never be the same, as Joan Henson affirms: "This experience has changed me. I spend far more time with my family, particularly my grandchildren. I am more positive and my appreciation of life has certainly intensified. Unimportant things fall aside."

Donations to the Imperial Cancer Research Fund: PO Box 123, Lincoln's Inn Fields, London, WC2A 3PX. Or call 0171-269 3662 for credit card donations.

INSIDE

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Estate agents' gory stories

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On 24.5.96 the objective of the fund (formerly known as Scotiabank) was broadened from investment in financial services to investment in any

*All figures are based on buying to selling price with net income reinvested over 5 years to 22.12.97. Source: Micropal. The value of investments, and any income from them, can fall as well as rise and you may not get back the amount invested. Tax concessions are not guaranteed; their value will depend on individual circumstances. Exchange rates may also affect performance. Past performance is not a guide to future returns. It has been announced that from 6th April 1999 it will not be possible to invest in a PEP. However, the Government plans to introduce Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) and Save & Prosper individual circumstances. Exchange rates may also affect performance. Past performance is not a guide to future returns. It has been announced that from 6th April 1999 it will not be possible to invest in a PEP. However, the Government plans to introduce Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) and Save & Prosper aims to be at the forefront of ISA development. In the meantime you will not be disadvantaged by investing in a PEP. Save & Prosper is regulated by the Personal Investment Authority and IMRO. We only advise on products and services offered by the Flemings and Save & Prosper Marketing Group. 1930/028

2/PERSONAL FINANCE

Labour's betrayal over pensions



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PERSONAL FINANCE JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

I am becoming increasingly cynical about New Labour. It is not my province to comment on the Government's mean and stingy attitude to lone parents and the disabled (although I just have).

No, it's their approach to savers in general and those planning their retirement in particular which makes me wonder whether the word "promise" holds a different meaning for the People's Party than it does for the rest of us.

Barely a year or two ago, Labour was determined to convince us of its commitment to everyone's right to a decent retirement income.

I remember a long telephone conversation with John Denham MP, then Opposition spokesman on pensions. Mr Denham poured scorn on Conservative plans to privatise the state pension system. By contrast, he was positively rhapsodic about his party's support for occupational pension schemes as an integral part of its "stakeholder" reforms.

Yet, as a story on page 7 shows, barely a few months in office have led to a remarkable about-turn from Mr Denham. At least 500,000 hapless employees will face a cut in the Government's contribution towards their pension schemes.

In recent years, a growing proportion of occupational pensions have switched from "final salary" to "money purchase" schemes. Employers have found it cheaper not to guarantee their workers' pen-

sions and prefer to make what are usually smaller contributions into money-purchase schemes.

Alongside this change, the Government is trying to persuade us to opt out of its state earnings-related pension scheme (Serps), which it claims not to be able to afford. Anyone in an employer's money-purchase pension scheme which opted out of Serps received a certain annual contribution to their pension, based on their income.

Except, as our story reveals, Mr Denham is slashing the amount paid out by almost one-third. Over a person's lifetime the amount to be cut is worth thousands of pounds. Yet Mr Denham's justification for the cut is even contradicted by figures from his own Government Actuary's Department.

The message from Labour seems to be that if you want to rob savers, don't go for smash and grab tactics, try a little sleight of hand instead. As for Mr Denham, maybe he is right to change his tune. Perhaps I could suggest a new one for him: *Rhapsody in Blue*.

We have been inundated by requests for *The Independent's* free Guide to Ethical Finances, written by me, which explains how to invest your money according to your conscience. You can obtain your copy of the guide, sponsored by Friends Provident, by calling 0800 21 44 87. Or fill in the coupon on page 8.

MONEY MAKEOVER

A better bet than bricks and mortar

Name: Jeffrey Davies
Age: 68
Occupation: Retired
The Problem: Mr Davies' income from both his state and private pensions is about £12,500, on which he is able to set money aside. He does not own a home but lives with his partner in her house, in Kent.

Mr Davies, who has a fairly cautious attitude to investment risk, has two small endowment policies, one of which will pay out next year, the other in 2008. He also has more than £100,000 in a postal account.

He would consider himself speculative with a small proportion of his capital and has recently purchased 635 Halifax shares. However, he feels the stock market is "so high that it is likely to fall before long".

Mr Davies's main aim is to enhance his income and he is considering the purchase of two, perhaps three, flats for letting purposes. He would like to pass on as much as possible of his assets to his beneficiaries, without jeopardising his own situation and lifestyle.

The Adviser: Andy Harris, independent financial adviser at Maddison Monetary Management, 44 High Street, Bagshot, Surrey, 0800 0742233.

The Advice: Property can be a good source of additional income and capital appreciation. However, as Mr Davies quite rightly points out, it can also be a headache. The potential issues include the lack of, or problems with tenants; liability to income tax on profits; maintenance costs; initial and ongoing expenses as well as liability to capital gains tax on any future sale proceeds. Given Mr Davies' circumstances, I would not recommend that he invest in property.

His partner owns the property in which they live and he is not a named beneficiary of her will or the property, so Mr Davies will need to allow for the potential purchase of a property in the future and is comfortable allowing £50,000 to this end.



Income options: Jeffrey Davies could consider investment bonds

Mike Gell/KN&P

Although he feels that his net income exceeds his expenditure by approximately £2,000 per annum, this money is not saved at present. Therefore, it would be prudent to assume that his actual expenditure is closer to £11,000.

He would like an additional gross annual income of about £6,000. Careful consideration has to be given to this in order not to cause a reduction in his age allowance, currently £5,220 per annum, allowable from 65. This can fall by £1 for every £2 of income in excess of £15,600, down to a minimum of £4,045 (the current personal allowance).

First and foremost, Mr

Davies should consider setting aside £5,000 as a cash reserve which is instantly accessible and available for any emergencies.

Safeway Bank is offering 7.3 per cent gross interest on balances in excess of £1,000. It also has a link with Abbey National, with whom Mr Davies currently holds his savings.

Long-term care is a growing concern for the older generations, given that the Government will only support those with savings and investments of less than £16,000. Serious consideration should therefore be given to methods of funding this.

Mr Davies could consider using a plan which incorporates

long-term care benefits, such as Royal Skandia's Care Account, however, these plans tend to be more expensive than other similar forms of investment due to the fact that the long-term cover benefits are costed in.

As the capital may need to be used for something other than long-term care, such as the purchase of a property, Mr Davies could be incurring unnecessary costs.

National Savings Certificates can provide security of capital with tax-free income if held for five years. Mr Davies should therefore invest £10,000 (the maximum allowable) into 11th issue index-linked certi-

rates, currently offering 2.75 per cent above inflation. As he invested £3,000 into a tax-exempt special savings account (Tessa) in March 1997, Mr Davies should therefore invest a further £6,000 over the next four years, as existing Tessas will be allowed to run their full five-year term before having to be rolled over into the new Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs).

Although Mr Davies would not normally consider personal equity plans (PEPs), advantage should be taken of the limited opportunity available prior to the advent of the proposed ISA. The Halifax shares should also be "peppered" into a single company PEP, thus avoiding tax currently payable on dividends and any future capital gains.

A maximum of £6,000 per annum can be invested into a general PEP and, given Mr Davies' risk tolerance, I would recommend he opt for a relatively cautious fund such as Guinness Flight's Cautious Managed Fund. This aims to invest at least 30 per cent of its assets into more secure bonds and Government securities.

Mr Davies should invest £6,000 now in the above PEP and a further £6,000 at the start of the 1998/99 tax year into an alternative PEP for diversification, such as a corporate bond PEP. This could be funded from his endowment plan maturing in April 1999. Investment at the start of the tax year will provide the maximum tax-free growth over the next 12 months.

After allowing for the above investments and cash reserve, Mr Davies will be left with £80,000. This capital could be "allocated" to provide for the above-mentioned long-term care and/or property purchase, while providing potential capital growth and supplementary income as required. Putting £70,000 in an investment bond would enable him to withdraw £3,500 per annum without affecting his age allowance.

This is because withdrawals of up to 5 per cent of the original

investment are deemed a return of capital, as opposed to income. Should he require more income, as a basic-rate taxpayer he can make further withdrawals with no tax liability, as it has been paid in the funds.

I would recommend the investment is left to grow for two years - in other words, the first withdrawal should be from "interest" rather than original capital.

Canada Life's Mercury Balanced Investment Fund, in its investment bond range, balances actively managed holdings of UK blue-chip shares with lower-risk investments such as gilt-edged index-linked, other fixed-interest securities, cash deposits and property.

In addition to an excellent track record of fund performance over one, three and five years in comparison with other funds within the same sector, the charges are very reasonable given that for investment in excess of £50,000, an additional allocation of 3 per cent is granted.

The remaining capital of £10,000 can be used to supplement Mr Davies' income in the first two years and should remain in his postal account. He should also continue funding his existing endowment plans to maturity in order to benefit from its terminal bonus.

Currently, inheritance tax is not an issue as his estate is valued at less than the nil-rate band of £215,000, although the current limit could be reduced in the March Budget.

A gift of £30,000 was made by Mr Davies to his son in August 1997. Under current legislation this is a potentially exempt transfer (PET) for inheritance tax purposes as long as he lives for a further six and a half years. Given his current income needs, further PETs may not be a option.

One final point worth noting is that the above recommendations would change considerably should Mr Davies marry.

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COLLECT TO INVEST

Oriental carpets take off as designers pile in

Christie's is selling the £1m collection of 122 Oriental carpets accumulated by the Italian carpet dealer Romolo Battilossi - at a time when prices for hand-knotted carpets are being swayed by American fashion. John Windsor reports on investments underfoot.

Never mind the number of knots to the inch. Never mind the worn bits. American interior designers are going for a "look". For them, carpets with central medallions are out. Interlocking overall patterns are in. All because there are more ways of arranging furniture - especially the dining table - without a target-like blob in the middle of the floor. Pastel rather than strong colours are preferred - Americans expect their carpets to blend, not to show off.

Collectors of antique carpets, as opposed to home-makers who can afford only modern carpets, still buy for authenticity above all. But the fashion for overall patterns of foliage or birds, rather than medallions,

has now spread from the modern to the antique market.

Western importers have imposed Western tastes on Oriental weavers ever since the British-Swiss Ziegler company, originally importers of cloth, opium and dried fruit, set up a carpet-buying office in Sultanabad in Persia in 1882. They specified no medallions and it is "Ziegler's", "Ziegler Mahals" and "Sultanabads" that are back in fashion today.

Prices for bold-patterned, loosely knotted Turkish Ushak carpets, made in large quantities for stores such as Liberty and Maples from around 1890, and considered by some to be the "poor man's Ziegler", have benefited from the trend. Bonhams is offering one next week, estimated £2,500-£3,000. Most recently, auction prices for the more detailed, overall-patterned Tabriz carpets from Azerbaijan (north-west Persia) have surged, regardless of quality.

A cropped and worn 22ft by 18ft Ziegler of about 1880, estimated £15,000-£25,000 in Christie's October sale, sold for an astonishing £57,600 to a trade buyer and is probably now gracing a New York apartment. For really mad prices for the right "look", New York takes the biscuit. In December, Christie's New York saleroom

took \$110,000 for a Tabriz with large-scale overall design, estimated at only \$20,000-\$30,000.

Home-makers with an eye for investment and only a couple of thousand pounds to spend should bear fashion trends in mind if they want their newly bought Oriental carpet to hold its value. Prices in the retail market are about 30 per cent down in real terms compared with 10 years ago, and British importers are ordering fine quality carpets - with the right designs - from India (not previously noted for quality), from skilled, refugee Afghan weavers settled in northern Iran, and even from Egypt. The market could be becoming overstocked.

Whether or not prices hold up, buying from a dealer who has driven down makers' prices is cheaper than buying from tourist bazaars in the country of origin. Liberty's carpet buyer, Roo Stewart, reports big demand for strongly coloured high-pile gahbeh (unclipped) carpets made by the Fars people of Persia (now south Iran). They have simple, naive and sometimes abstract all-over designs, no medallions and sometimes no borders. The Western-influenced designs were introduced only six or seven years ago. An 8ft 6in by 5ft 3in gahbeh costs

£950 from Liberty in Regent Street, London.

Think twice before buying from cut-price bucket shops. Those 50 per cent reductions may be genuine - but all they mean is that the carpets have been displayed at some ludicrously inflated price for 28 days, in order to comply with trading regulations.

Yuda Ambalo, the 30-year-old Afghan who founded the Oriental Carpet Centre in Finsbury Park, which houses 30 dealers, has noticed that buyers for the home either rely on the advice of interior designers or get deeply involved, buying guide books, learning to understand designs and how to tell the difference between chemical and natural dyes. Above all, they shop around.

"City" carpets, hand-woven in urban factories from patterns, may have a comforting uniformity of quality and design, but there are no two tribal rugs alike. Tribal weavers "knot out of their heads" instead of following patterns. Mistakes and irregularities give tribal rugs their charm. But the only way to find out if you are being overcharged for one is to compare dealers' prices. Mr Ambalo also strongly recommends *Tribal Rugs: A Buyer's Guide* by Lee

Allane, published by Thames and Hudson at £8.95.

Modern Chinese and Pakistani carpets bear cryptic but helpful quality tags. A heavy quality 12ft by 9ft Chinese carpet from Liberty, priced £1,000-£1,200, will have a tag announcing "90-line 5/8ths super washed". A Bokhara-design Pakistan of the same size, of medium grade, £1,300-£1,400, will have a tag with the knot-count "11/22".

Price fluctuations can be purely political. Colourful flat-woven kilims from Afghanistan and Iran glutted the Western market during the Russian invasion of Afghanistan and the Gulf War, as weavers fled. A 8ft by 4ft Shabsavan kilim that might have fetched a peak £750 up to 1990 could be had for only £450-£500 in 1995. Now prices are creeping back to 1990 levels.

The fear and uncertainty of new buyers has meant that carpet brokers and retailers who have earned recommendations for trustworthiness have prospered. Mr Ambalo recommends the Oriental Rug Gallery of St Albans, Eton and Guildford. Or commission a broker to bargain with wholesalers at a bonded warehouse.

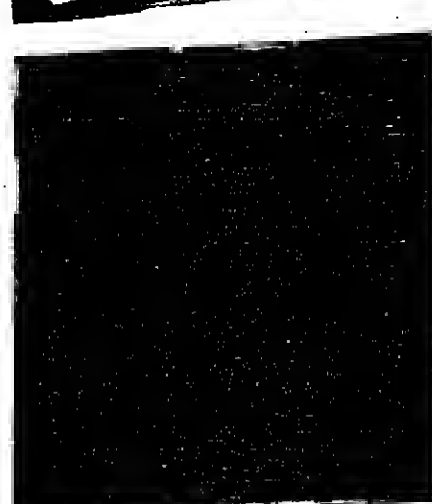
"Trends of the future? Towards more curvilinear Persian de-

signs, perhaps, says Christie's William Robinson. He thinks that Kirmans, made near Fars, are undervalued. One in his forthcoming sale, with ice-blue field, fussy foliage - and a medallion - woven around 1880, is estimated £10,000-£14,000. And for long-term investors willing to buck the fashion trend, there is a traditional central Persian Kashan "Mochtasam" (the name of the original weaver) of about 1890, with strong colours, intricate design and medallion estimated £12,000-£16,000. You can buy a Kashan rug retail for £1,200-£1,500 today that would have sold for £2,500-£3,000 10 years ago.

Julian Blair, co-founder of the Oriental Rug Gallery, reports that, just recently, the Americans have started buying strong colours again. "Britain is usually about three years behind," he says.

The Battilossi carpet sale: Wednesday 2.30pm, Christie's, 8 King Street, London SW1 (0171-839 9060). Bonhams Oriental and European rugs and carpets sale: Tuesday 2pm, Oriental Rug Gallery, St Albans (01727 841046), Eton (01753 623000), Guildford (01483 457600). Broker: David Wilkins (0171-727 7603).

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Flying high: Ushak rug to be auctioned at Bonhams on Tuesday, est price £2,500+

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How to track down a TEP



ROBIN AMLÖT
INTERNET
INVESTOR

I am still casting about for potential alternatives to the proposed Individual Savings Account, which is a lot less tax-efficient than tax-exempt special savings accounts (Tessas) and personal equity plans (PEPs). Run Tessa and PEP together fast enough and you get TEP, the acronym for a traded endowment policy. While not necessarily tax-efficient, TEPs can still be quite tax-friendly as investments.

The insurance company running the endowment policy pays income tax and capital gains tax on the underlying fund, but the proceeds of the policy are not generally subject to tax in the hands of the original policyholder. However, without going into tiresome detail about the different rules for "qualifying", "non-qualifying" and "paid-up" policies, suffice to say that the policy proceeds are subject to capital gains tax (CGT) in the hands of a purchaser. Yet since most of us do not use our capital gains tax allowance, much of the policy gains can usually be sheltered within the annual CGT allowance.

When you buy a TEP you are not just taking a punt on the markets but also on the generosity of the insurance company which runs the policy. What the round of bonus declarations last month has reinforced is the continuing swing from annual bonuses to terminal bonuses.

That is to say, more of the final maturity value - already around a third or more - of the endowment policy is coming from the terminal bonus. It is

a way for the insurance companies to offer fewer hostages to fortune over the term of the policy.

But it does mean a larger hostage to fortune on the part of the policyholder or second-hand purchaser. However, that caveat aside, it is hard to argue with statistics showing maturing second-hand endowment policies offering double-digit annual returns.

So where can we find such policies on the web? A number of TEP market-makers have websites, which vary in content and usefulness from the rather bare offering from Beale Dobie - which appears to consist solely of the home page and a page of its office addresses and telephone numbers - to others which include explanatory guides and price lists of available policies.

Absolute Assigned Policies Ltd (AAP), for example, is the appointed policy supplier to the BZW Endowment Fund, a £25m publicly quoted endowment-policy investment fund, which is managed by Barclays Global Investors. AAP's website offers potential TEP purchasers the ability to specify investment requirements by filling in an e-mail form. Sellers may also e-mail from the site, requesting a standard valuation form - policy valuations are free and without obligation.

Neville James is another market-maker which includes a price list of policies on its website. SurrenderLink does not have a list of policies on its site but dangles the enticing prospect of a possible return for policy sellers in excess of 40 per

cent above the insurance company's quoted surrender value.

You cannot buy a TEP on the web from any of these market-makers but you can bid for one in a cyber auction held by Endowments Direct, which holds live auctions on-line every working day. You are required to register to enter the Endowments Direct website, although no charge is made for looking around.

If you sell your policy through Endowments Direct, there is a minimum commission payable of £250. If you buy through the website, in addition to the bid price, you face legal fees of £100 plus VAT. The service was set up by TEP broker IPTC and deals in second-hand with-profits life assurance policies underwritten by the top 50 UK insurers. The site includes a listing of these companies with links to their websites (if they have one).

Free policy valuation is offered for sellers. Purchasers may read an extremely complicated document on the site called "Computing the estimated price by iteration". This document is technical in nature and attempts to explain step-by-step how to compute a purchase price for a security, such as a traded endowment policy.

It would have been much more user-friendly if, instead of suggesting you grab a blank piece of paper, IPTC had mounted a value calculator along the lines of the calculators offered by many mortgage broker/leaser websites.

Beale Dobie: www.bealedobie.co.uk
Absolute Assigned Policies: www.aap.co.uk
Neville James: www.neville-james.co.uk
SurrenderLink: www.moneyworld.co.uk/surrenderlink
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BRIAN TORAL

Merger mania boosts shares

Sometimes I wonder what it might have been like to have been a headline writer. Those pithy phrases are designed to capture people's attention and deliver a great deal of information in very few words. Just now, the obvious headline to describe our own stock market would be "Merger Mania Boosts Shares". It is difficult to know how to describe the present situation better.

Both 1996 and early 1997 were active in the takeover field. The reasoning then was an incoming Labour government would be more likely to obstruct corporate activity. In this, as in so many ways, today's Government is proving relatively indistinguishable from its predecessor thus far. Meanwhile, the steady globalisation of trade is leading to a frenzy of merger activity all around the world.

The big news was the impending marriage between Glaxo and SmithKline Beecham. The drugs industry is no stranger to alliances. Both partners in this particular deal are themselves the product of relatively recent mergers. SmithKline joined another potential suitor in order to tie the knot with Glaxo. American Home Products may even now be looking at alternatives.

Karl Marx wrote that capitalism must fail eventually because successful companies inevitably become larger, so reducing competition. He was writing at a time when we lacked today's information technology, corporate regulation and competitive environment. Even so, it is worrying to see how powerful some firms have become.

I have written before on how multi-national corporations have more wealth and exert greater influence than many countries. Indeed, I read recently that the 400 wealthiest people in the world own more than the 44 poorest nations. So much for greater equality.

With bidders lining up for Energy Group and GUS trying to take out troubled Argos, the industries touched by this M&A rampage are many and varied and the profits delivered to investors considerable to compensate for the lack of windfall bonuses this year. It also has the ring of perpetual motion about it. Takeovers tend to reduce the supply of equity. Shortages push up prices. It is not just the victims of corporate predators that see their share values rise in circumstances such as this.

It is not too cynical to believe that heightened corporate activity can be the sign of a mature bull market. Things have changed, though, so it is probably too simplistic to believe this is the last rush of the unwary before realism sets in. Still, with the effects of the Asian crisis still under-represented in Western markets and looming hostilities in the Gulf, it would be as well not to take the burst of takeover activity as a sign that a new golden age for investors is dawning.

Instead, it strikes me that an opportunity exists for investors to weed out shares and take profits ahead of a Budget which is likely to be less friendly to those who place their faith in equities.

Brian Toral is chairman of the Investment Strategy Committee at Greig Middleton.

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Telephone	% Rate and period	Max amt	Fee	Access	
MORTGAGES					
FIXED RATES					
Standard Bank	0800 130148	1.25% to 1.50%	90p	0.75%	
West Bromwich BS	0121 828 7070	3.75% to 4.10%	75p	£300 cash rebate	
Halifax	0845 606 0000	5.95% to 6.10%	75p	£295	
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES					
Standard Bank	0800 130148	1.25% for 1 year	90p	£295	
West Bromwich BS	0121 828 7070	4.50% to 5.10%	90p	£295	
Halifax	01222 344185	6.00% to 6.10%	90p	£295	
FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATES					
Standard Bank	0845 606 0000	4.40% to 4.60%	90p	£295	
West Bromwich BS	0121 828 7070	5.00% to 5.20%	90p	£295	
Halifax	01222 344185	6.00% to 6.10%	90p	£295	
FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES					
Standard Bank	0845 606 0000	5.70% for 1 year	90p	£295	
West Bromwich BS	0121 828 7070	5.95% to 6.10%	90p	£295	
Halifax	0800 302010	6.75% for 5 years	90p	£295	
UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS					
Telephone	APR %	Fixed monthly payments on £5K over 3 yrs			
Unsecured					
		With insurance	Without insurance		
Standard Bank	0345 421421	9.9% A	£163.13	£166.11	
Direct Line	0181 680 9966	12.0% A	£163.75	£166.38	
RBS Direct	0800 121153	12.0%	£168.15	£168.26	
Secured Loans (SECOND CHARGE)					
Telephone	APR	Max LTV	Advance	Term	
Cyberlink Bank	0800 240024	9.1%	£2K to £10K	6 months to 25 years	
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 121121	10.7%	£2.5K to £10K	3 years to 25 years	
First Direct	0845 100103	11.2%	£2K to £10K	Up to 40 years	
OVERDRAFTS					
Telephone	Account	Authorized %	APR %	Unsecured APR %	
Almora & Lister	0800 955595	Almora	0.75%	9.5%	28.5%
Bank of Scotland Direct	0800 804804	Direct cheque	11.0%	-	28.5%
Halifax	0800 302010	Revolving	0.50%	12.2%	28.5%
CREDIT CARDS					
Telephone	Card type	Rate	APR	Annual fee	
Capital One Bank	0800 680000	Visa	0.56% to 6.00% N	£4	
RBS Advance	0800 077700	Visa	0.64% to 7.95% N	£6	
First Direct	0800 121153	Visa or linked AMV	1.02% to 13.00% N	£0	
BUILD CARDS					
Capital One Bank	0800 680000	Visa	0.56% to 6.00% N	£4	
Co-operative Bank	0345 212121	Basic Rate Visa	0.00% to 11.50% N	£0	
RBS Advance	0800 077700	Visa	0.64% to 7.95% N	£6	
STORE CARDS					
Telephone	Payment by direct debit	Payment by other methods			
John Lewis	1.39%	1.39%			
Marl's & Spencer	1.93%	2.03%			
Gates	1.93%	2.20%			

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U - Introductory rate for a limited period
V - Unemployment insurance

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INSTANT ACCESS					
Cheltenham BS	0800 445 265	Savings	Instant	5.75%	0%
Woolwich	0800 222 200	Client Savings	Instant	5.50%	0%
Standard & London BS	0845 413 853	Branch Personal	Instant	5.50%	0%
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 225 777	Premier Access	Instant	5.50%	0%
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS					
Halifax	0800 302 010	InstantDirect	Instant	5.75%	0%
Standard Bank	0845 645 089	Instant Access	Instant	5.50%	0%
Sainsbury	0800 995 555	Direct Savings	Instant	5.50%	0%
Almora & Lister	0845 606 0000	First Class Instant	Instant	5.50%	0%
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS					
Standard Bank	0800 302 010	Standard Bank	30 Day	5.75%	0%
Standard & London BS	0845 413 853	Standard & London	30 Day	5.50%	0%
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 225 777	Leeds & Holbeck	30 Day	5.50%	0%
Cheltenham BS	0800 445 265	Cheltenham	30 Day	5.50%	0%
Woolwich	0800 222 200	Woolwich	30 Day	5.50%	0%
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS					
Woolwich	0800 222 200	Woolwich	Instant	5.50%	0%
Halifax	0800 302 010	Halifax	Instant	5.50%	0%
Cheltenham BS	0800 445 265	Cheltenham	Instant	5.50%	0%
Woolwich	0800 222 200	Woolwich	Instant	5.50%	0%
FIXED RATE BONDS					
Standard & London BS	0845 413 853	Standard & London	6 Month	5.75%	0%
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 225 777	Leeds & Holbeck	1 Year	5.50%	0%
Cheltenham BS	0800 445 265	Cheltenham	1 Year	5.50%	0%
Woolwich	0800 222 200	Woolwich	1 Year	5.50%	0%
FIRST TESSAS					
Standard Bank	0800 302 010	Standard Bank	5 Year	5.75%	0%
Standard & London BS	0845 413 853	Standard & London	5 Year	5.50%	0%
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 225 777	Leeds & Holbeck	5 Year	5.50%	0%
Cheltenham BS	0800 445 265	Cheltenham	5 Year	5.50%	0%
Woolwich	0800 222 200	Woolwich	5 Year	5.50%	0%
FOLLOW-ON TESSAS					
Standard Bank	0800 302 010	Standard Bank	5 Year	5.75%	0%
Standard & London BS	0845 413 853	Standard & London	5 Year	5.50%	0%
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 225 777	Leeds & Holbeck	5 Year	5.50%	0%
Cheltenham BS	0800 445 265	Cheltenham	5 Year	5.50%	0%
Woolwich	0800 222 200	Woolwich	5 Year	5.50%	0%
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)					
Standard Bank	0800 302 010	Standard Bank	1 Year	5.75%	0%
Standard & London BS	0845 413 853	Standard & London	2 Year	5.50%	0%
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 225 777	Leeds & Holbeck	3 Year	5.50%	0%
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Woolwich	0800 222 200	Woolwich	5 Year	5.50%	0%
OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)					
Standard Bank	0800 302 010	Standard Bank	Instant	5.75%	0%
Standard & London BS	0845 413 853	Standard & London	Instant	5.50%	0%
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 225 777	Leeds & Holbeck	Instant	5.50%	0%
Cheltenham BS	0800 445 265	Cheltenham	Instant	5.50%	0%
Woolwich	0800 222 200	Woolwich	Instant	5.50%	0%
NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (gross)					
Standard Bank	0800 302 010	Standard Bank	1 Month	5.75%	0%
Standard & London BS	0845 413 853	Standard & London	1 Month	5.50%	0%
Leeds & Holbeck BS	0800 225 777	Leeds & Holbeck	1 Month	5.50%	0%
Cheltenham BS	0800 445 265	Cheltenham	1 Month	5.50%	0%
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* All rates are shown gross and are subject to change without notice.
Source: MONEYFACTS 01892 500677 5 February 1998

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UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET: JOHN ANDREW

Know your rights as a shareholder ... and claim your perks

When you buy a share in a company, you become a part-owner of the enterprise. Under company law, this entitles you to certain rights. Some of these relate to the financial aspects of owning shares, while others concern the communications you are entitled to receive. You may take action to make your views known on the company's performance or its activities. Some companies also give shareholders certain perks, usually as discounts on their products or services.

First, let us look at the financial aspects. Shareholders receive a right to a share of a company's earnings. Called dividends, they are paid net of basic-rate tax, usually twice a year. You will be sent a cheque for the amount due, though you can normally ask for it to be paid direct to your bank account. You will also receive a dividend

voucher, which you should keep for when you complete your tax return.

However, you may not receive a dividend due shortly after you purchased the shares. If you bought the shares "ex div", it means the former owner will receive the payment. To ensure a smooth administration, there has to be a cut-off point. The dividend goes to the person on the company's register of shareholders at a particular date, generally three weeks before the payment is made. Share prices usually fall when they go ex dividend, which is some compensation for the new investor. In *The Independent*, there is an x against the price of ex dividend shares. The contract note from your stockbroker states if the shares were purchased ex dividend.

Some companies give shareholders the

option of taking dividends in shares a "scrip dividend". This is ideal if you are seeking growth as opposed to income. However, do keep a note of their "price" and the date you receive them as you will need this information for capital gains tax calculations when the holding is sold.

All shareholders named on the register are entitled to receive certain documents that the company periodically issues. These include the annual report and accounts and notices about important events such as acquisitions or disposals. It is important to remember that if you hold your shares through a nominee, such as a PEP, only the nominee's name will appear on the register. Therefore, if you want company information, you must check your nominee will send it to you - and it may charge for this service.

Every company must hold an annual general meeting (AGM) once a year. Shareholders whose names are on the register have the right to attend and speak at AGMs. While the vast majority are sedate affairs, some can be quite lively. For example, the attendance of Cedric the Pig at British Gas's AGM in protest at Cedric Brown's remuneration package.

It is not unknown for companies to give shareholders who attend handouts. For example, Cadbury Schweppes has given chocolates and Hillsdown a bag of groceries. However, even if the AGM is at noon, do not expect a buffet lunch. You will usually be offered a drink, or coffee and biscuits.

The purpose of AGMs is for shareholders to vote on important matters affecting the company, such as raising more

capital by a rights issue or appointing and dismissing directors or auditors. Shareholders are invited to ask the chairman questions. Those who do not wish to attend may vote by post.

Under company law, shareholders can also put forward motions if they can muster 5 per cent of the company's total voting rights, or 100 shareholders, each with at least £100 worth of shares. Resolutions must be submitted no less than six weeks before the meeting. A copy of the resolution must be sent to all shareholders - companies are allowed to charge for the cost of their circulation.

Increasingly, more companies are giving shareholders perks. For example, there may be reduced accommodation costs from a hotel chain; a discount on sundry

items purchased from a high street retailer or even a modest price reduction on a new home! The rules vary: some companies insist on a minimum level of shares being held, perhaps for a minimum period, while others are happy to give the concession to all.

Of course, no investment decision should be made on the basis of the perks. The normal criteria for selecting shares for your portfolio should always prevail.

Midland Stockbrokers has compiled a list of companies that offer perks in a wide variety of categories. It also details the terms of the offers. For a free copy, write to Midland Stockbrokers, Perks Guide, Marketing Department, Mariner House, Peppys Street, London EC3N 4DA, enclosing a self-addressed A4 or A5 size envelope.

Gilts come in from the cold

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Some more thoughts this week on the subject of equities versus gilts, prompted by the publication of Barclays Capital's annual gilts-equity survey. As regular readers will know, I have been promoting the attractions of gilts as a sensible home for investment capital for some time, and it is encouraging to find a lot of supportive arguments for this in the Barclays study.

What the survey shows in essence is that gilts, having been for years the pariah of the investment community, are once more an attractive and sensible proposition for investors.

The main message of the Barclays study remains, as it has been since it was first launched in the mid 1950s, that equities are the best asset class for long-term investors. The data in the study goes back to 1918 and shows, if you are prepared to hold your portfolio of shares for 20 years, you are, in effect, immune from the risk of losing money.

Despite two world wars, Opec and all the rest of the 20th century's horrors, there has been no 20-year period this century during which you would not have shown a positive real return from holding a broadly based equity portfolio.

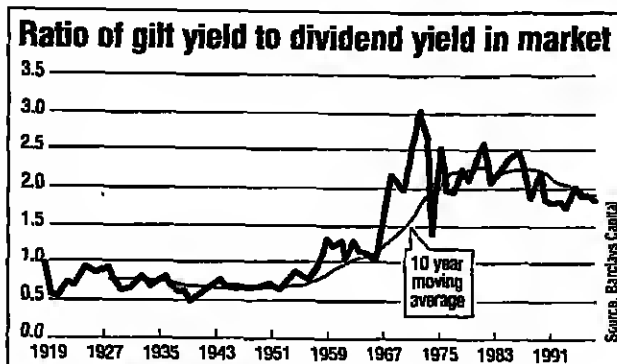
At a global level, the Barclays data supports the view that equities are superior long-term, but the margin of superiority is obviously not so clear-cut.

For example, its calculations show that if your transactions costs amount to just 1 per cent of your portfolio's value each year, it can cut the final value of your portfolio by 50 per cent over a long period. For a higher-rate taxpayer, the long-run real rate of return from shares falls from 6 to just over 4 per cent per annum.

Gilts are a rather different story. For most of the post-war period, they have been a disaster as an investment class. Inflation is the great enemy of all fixed-interest securities and, with the concomitant high level of interest rates, ruined the value of all types of gilts for many years. Anyone who bought gilts in the 1960s and reinvested the income would have seen the value of their investment roughly halve in real terms by the mid to late 1970s.

Since then, however, their performance has been steadily improving, helped by the worldwide assault on inflation by governments. Not only have total rates of return (income plus capital appreciation) been positive for a period of years, but since 1990, with the global fall in real interest rates, we have also had the almost unprecedented experience of seeing real increases in the capital value of gilts as well.

As the chart shows, the overall performance of gilts (after

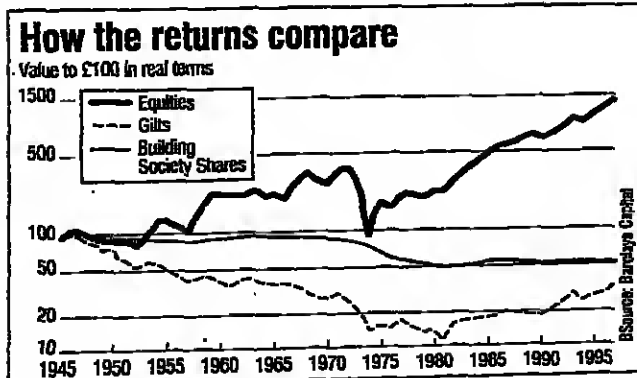


allowing for tax at the basic rate and for the effects of inflation) has been steadily upward since around 1980. It has not been quite as good as the performance of shares, but it has been way ahead of the performance of the typical building society account (which continues to lose value in real terms for savers who pay tax).

The conclusion of Michael Hughes, the economics adviser at Barclays Capital and the man responsible for its study, is that gilts are once again becoming a sound alternative to equities. Not only are economic fundamentals working in their favour but investors are also starting to benefit from a shift in the relative valuation of gilts versus equities. That is to say, while shares are highly valued by historical standards, gilts are not - not surprisingly, since memories of the bad experiences of the past are firmly etched in many investors' minds.

Of course, gilts will remain vulnerable to any sudden inflation shocks. If you think that such a shock is likely, then gilts are probably still not for you. But bear in mind that neither gilt yields nor risk-adjusted returns have yet returned to the level they enjoyed before inflation sent them to the investment doghouse in the 1950s.

Given that equity valuations are so high, Barclays suggests the gilts renaissance is likely to continue for some time. They expect gilts to continue to provide positive real rates of return, and also for the yield ratio (the ratio between gilt yields and dividend yields) to continue falling. I am confident that their analysis is soundly based.



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6/PERSONAL FINANCE

TESSA BEST DEALS

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Flat Variable Rate	7.90 per cent	(£1,000-£9,000)
Stepped Variable Rate	8.20 per cent	(£6,000-£9,000)
Fixed Rate Tessa		
B'ham Midlands	7.05 per cent	(£1,000-£9,000)
NatWest Bank	7.45 per cent	(£6,000-£9,000)
Follow-on Tessas		
Flat Variable Rate	7.90 per cent	(£5,000-£9,000)
Stepped Variable Rate	8.20 per cent	(£6,000-£9,000)

Source: Iain Morse. Tessa rates change regularly. For the most up-to-date deals, check The Independent's best-buy tables.

Time to invest in a Tessa

Safe but boring, tax-free but inflexible – over the past few years, the verdict of self-styled stock market sophisticates on Tessas has always had a mild ring of contempt to it. But, as Iain Morse reports, Government plans to introduce a new Individual Savings Account (ISA) mean the humble Tessa may be about to make a final comeback.



A fast chance to pile in: Existing Tessas can run beyond the introduction of ISAs

per cent of the value of your first year's investment. Given the current state of the Japanese economy, this is one for enthusiasts.

HSBC links its equity Tessa to the FTSE 100 alone. Alastair Fraser, head of business development at HSBC, argues: "This represents a relatively low risk exposure to equity markets, with absolute capital security – after all there has been no five year period since 1979 when the index did not rise." This is true, but the Tessa only offers a 1 per cent increase in the FTSE 100 – and not until it has risen by at least 20 per cent over its five-year term.

Tessas can be transferred from one provider to another, without loss of tax relief. But, as we have seen, there may be penalties imposed which wipe out any tax saving made on the account.

For example, Northern Rock levies a fixed charge of £30, plus a charge for administrative time spent arranging the transfer. If you had invested £1,000 into its account, receiving £68 gross interest on a variable rate of 6.8 per cent, transfer penalties would leave little gain.

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Please note that it might not be possible to continue investment in a PEP after April 1999 when the Government plan to introduce a new Individual Savings Account. Past performance is no guide to the future: unit prices can go down as well as up. The performance of PEPs invested in equity based assets will reflect the performance of the underlying assets. Information/advice will only relate to Norwich Union products. We may telephone you to confirm receipt of your information pack. "Buy to sell" performance of the Norwich Global Tracking PEP gross income reinvested 1/1/96 to 31/12/97. "Although the Norwich Global Tracking PEP has only been available for 1 year, if you had invested £1,000 on 1/1/96 in the underlying funds of the Norwich Global Tracking PEP (in the same proportions as the PEP) your investment would have been worth £1,286 (a growth of 28.6%) on 31/12/97, assuming the income tax benefits of a PEP also applied. Data that you provide may be used by Norwich Union group companies, your financial adviser or other relevant organisations for marketing purposes such as market research and contacting you regarding your insurance and investment needs. For your protection all telephone calls will be recorded. The Personal Investment Authority and HMRC regulate Norwich Union Portfolio Services Limited.

Is it finally time for a Tessa? After all, there can't be too much wrong with a tax-free deposit account. Moreover, although personal equity plans (PEPs) will have to be transferred into the new Individual Savings Account from April 1999, existing Tessas will be allowed to run the balance of their five-year term.

In effect, this minor loophole means savers will be able to shelter part of their cash in a tax-free haven for a few more years. The burning question remains, however, that of which Tessa to choose.

The most common Tessa (tax-exempt special savings account) is the straightforward, variable-rate one. This rate may be the same no matter how much you pay in. Midland Bank, for instance, offers a current flat rate of 7.75 per cent on all Tessa deposits over £100.

Other providers offer stepped interest rates, depending on the amount invested. Pay in the maximum each year – £3,000 in year one and up to £1,800 in subsequent years – and you qualify for the highest return. For example, Stafford Railway Building Society starts at 6.5 per cent on amounts up to £3,000, rising to 7.6 per cent on the maximum balance of £9,000.

The basis on which interest is calculated can also vary: Cater Allen Bank pays compound interest – where

interest is added on the interest – on a monthly basis. According to Cater Allen, this increases returns, pushing a current variable rate of 6.697 per cent up to around 6.85 per cent.

This basis for interest-rate calculation becomes important if you are saving into a Tessa on a monthly basis and, in effect, leading this money interest free to the provider until the next award of interest to your account.

Also, if rates are falling, say by 0.5 per cent in two successive six-month periods, an annual account will pay interest for the past year at the lower rate. On an investment of £9,000, this could cost £45 in lost interest in comparison with an account calculating interest monthly.

Some variable-rate Tessas offer bonuses if you leave both invested capital and tax-free interest in the account until maturity. Chelsea Building Society offers 5 per cent of the amount invested in the first year: if you put in £3,000 in the first year, this means a tax-free bonus of £150. Nottingham Building Society offers 0.25 per cent of the maximum invested.

Things become more complicated when the bonus is paid on the interest itself. First Trust Bank offers a 5 per cent bonus on the total interest paid after five years. According to

Moneyfacts, the statistical information provider, a maximum return of £2,359 for five-year Tessas maturing this January would have delivered a bonus of £117.95.

How to choose between such offers? At its simplest, if you believe interest rates will rise over the term of your Tessa, a variable-rate account makes sense. If you think rates will fall, fixed-rate accounts are better. Most experts believe rates will drop in the next year, but because fixed-rate Tessas currently pay a lower rate than variable ones, you need to be careful when doing your sums.

The best fixed-rate Tessa is currently available from NatWest Bank, paying a compound rate of 7.45 per cent, but only for deposits of over £6,600.

Then there are escalator Tessas, which pay rising rates of interest over the five-year term. Most ask for a minimum investment of the full £9,000, and the amounts paid tend to start at between 6 and 6.25 per cent in year one, rising to between 7.25 and 9 per cent in year five.

Here too care is needed: averaging out returns over five years shows that these accounts offer no more than an annual return 7 per cent. Unless providers improve their rates, these are to be avoided.

Equity-linked Tessas are slightly more risky: they offer

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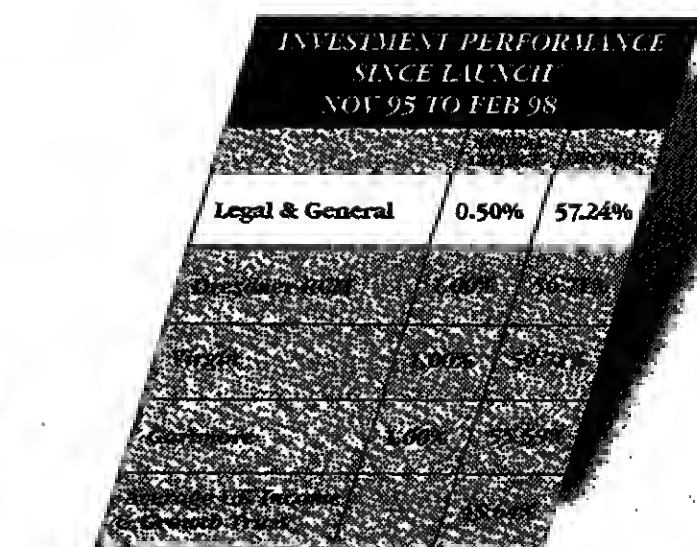
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The Government's hidden cut in pensions

Question: how does the Government get away with cutting the pay of hundreds of thousands of people without them noticing? Answer: by taking it from a part of their earnings about which they know very little. Andrew Verity explains.

In a surprisingly unnoticed move two weeks ago, the Government indicated it was in effect cutting the pay of half a million people by 0.9 per cent. The cut happened in a now tried-and-tested fashion - by taking it from pensions.

It came in a little-publicised answer, by John Denham, Pensions Minister at the Department of Social Security (DSS), without any public consultation, in a reply to a Parliamentary question on DSS rebates to pension schemes.

A DSS rebate is the amount that goes into a private pension scheme (Serps), when staff leave it to join a company scheme.



More pain, less gain: Half a million people have had their pension contributions cut, on average, by over £170 a year

state earnings-related pension scheme (Serps), when staff leave it to join a company scheme.

Until last week, members of "group money-purchase pensions", where a person's retirement income depends on the investment return of their fund - often run by large companies such as WH Smith, Legal & General or Tesco - received a minimum rebate worth 3.1 per cent of earnings.

For someone on the average wage of £19,115, this would amount to £592 over the year. Mr Denham has indicated that from April 1999, this rebate will fall to just 2.2 per cent - or £420.

In other words, members of these schemes have just been told they will lose an average of £172 a year.

While members of these schemes will be worse off, holders of personal pensions - those vehicles panned by the Treasury for being too expensive - will now receive substantially higher rebates if they opt out of Serps. Minimum rebates of 3.8 per cent, which increase with age, would give a member on the average wage a pay boost of £726 a year.

Within the "pensions priesthood" - those who are paid to study the haroque world of UK pensions - many are

questioning why on earth the Government has done this.

Doug Johnstone, managing director of actuaries Johnstone Douglas, says: "The rebates are being reduced by one-third at the youngest ages without any satisfactory explanation from the Government as to the reason why. It is a very worrying time for employees who will really need a great deal of explanation and reassurance."

So far, no Government minister has explained the reason for this cut. But the most plausible theory is that it is trying to stop large companies taking advantage of a form of "arbitrage" - switching to the most beneficial option offered within the labyrinthine world of pensions legislation.

Large companies such as Guinness - and possibly up to 70 further companies - have been taking advantage of new laws since the Pensions Act 1995, which came into force last April.

The Act allows the companies to gain a saving worth up to 1 per cent of their pay-roll - a big temptation for any finance director - by

manipulating the rules as to how much rebate they should get.

Most large companies run "final salary" pensions - schemes which guarantee an income worth up to two-thirds of a member's salary at retirement. When the government pays the rebates, it pays less to cover expenses involved in running final-salary schemes than it does to other schemes.

How can a finance director raise the amount he receives in rebate? By using different rules. By treating it instead as a group money-purchase scheme - the type run by WH Smith - the company can get much more government money in rebates. The glittering saving, of 1 per cent of payroll, benefits not the members but the company. It has been estimated that if all companies followed this route, the Government could pay out an extra £1.5bn a year. Easy money for the companies and a big loss for the taxpayer.

By cutting the rebate by 0.9 points to 2.2 per cent, Mr Denham has taken the joy out of this game. But has he taken a large sledgehammer to crack

a small nut? Pension gurus believe he has also wiped out thousands of smaller schemes which can no longer exist as they are. They must either wind up, or pay much less to their members.

Experts also believe Government generosity towards personal pensions stems from a fear that Gordon Brown's July Budget, which took money from personal pensions by abolishing tax credits on dividends, would cause millions to return to Serps. As long as Harriet Harman, the Secretary of State for Social Security, was struggling to lure people into private, "shareholder" pensions, this might have been upsetting.

Stephen Cameron, a pensions expert at Scottish Equitable, said: "We believe the rebates were increased to avoid a massive return to Serps by personal pension holders."

Peter Murray, chairman of the National Association of Pension Funds, points out that Mr Denham claimed to have taken into account the advice of the Government Actuary. A copy of the Actuary's report to the minister (placed in the House of Commons library) reveals that he was asked to assume that the only group money-purchase pensions were large ones with cheap operating costs. In fact, said the Government Actuary, the majority were small - and needed bigger expenses. But Mr Denham set the rebates as if they were all big, and cheap to run.

Mr Murray said: "There is a fundamental inconsistency between the Government's declared policy of supporting occupational pension provision and the policies which the Treasury has been pursuing. We will be pressing the Government to hold a consultation [with interested parties]."

The Independent has published a 'Free Guide to Direct Pensions'. The guide, written by this paper's personal finance editor, Nic Cicutti, is sponsored by Eagle Star. It is available free by calling 0800 77 66 66. Or look out for the coupon on this page.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE AFFECTED

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- Ask your employer to make the same contributions into a personal pension. You will get a bigger rebate. But find a cheap personal pension.
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17/02

Don't be tied to estate agents' advice

Mortgage advisers face a crackdown at the end of April, when a new code of sales conduct takes effect. As Paul Slade reports, among those hit by the code will be estate agency chains owned by the big lenders.

Housebuyers calling at estate agents such as Halifax Property Services or Black Horse have the chance to see a mortgage adviser there and then. But, as sales practice stands, they have little chance of telling whether the adviser they are talking to is, in effect, a salesman for the parent lender, or offering genuine independent advice.

In the case of Halifax Property Services (HPS), as much as 80 per cent of the loans business done by its advisers goes to Halifax itself. Other lenders will get a look-in only if the customer fails to meet Halifax's credit score, or if switching their mortgage would mean incurring redemption penalties.

Each Halifax Property Services branch is given an annual target for the percentage

of loans business its mortgage adviser is expected to deliver to the parent bank.

At the other end of the scale is Skipton Building Society, where advisers in its Connell estate agents chain send less than 10 per cent of business to Skipton.

Genuine independent advisers have long complained that borrowers are left believing they have been given independent advice. Ian Darby of John Charcol says: "It gets very confusing for Joe Public. I've heard tied agents saying they're independent mortgage brokers."

"With the code of practice, you will have to define whether you are operating from a panel of lenders, whether you're operating as the agent of one lender only, or whether you're operating from the whole open market. That's the definition that's going to give lender-owned business a challenge."

Hilary McVitty of Woolwich says the group's own Woolwich Property Services operates a similar system to HPS. "Their initial interview is in terms of Woolwich products only," she says. "Only if they didn't qualify for a Woolwich loan would they move on to something else."

When the new code takes effect on 30 April, all mortgage advisers will be obliged to disclose their true status. Borrowers will be able to phone a central register to see if their own adviser is listed there.

In the case of HPS this means customers will be told: "Our mortgage recommendations are based upon looking at Halifax products first and then, where our assessment of our needs indicate, or you specifically request, we will advise you on mortgage products from a selection of other lenders."

This information is delivered both verbally, as soon as the mortgage consultation begins, and later in writing.

Alan Snowball of HPS points out that all HPS branches – and the staff inside – are clearly badged with the parent group's name. This, he argues, means people should know what to expect when they come in the door.

But Skipton's David Charlton is not so sure. He says: "Whether the real choice offered is made clear enough at the moment is a debatable point. I think anyone going for a mortgage really has to ask

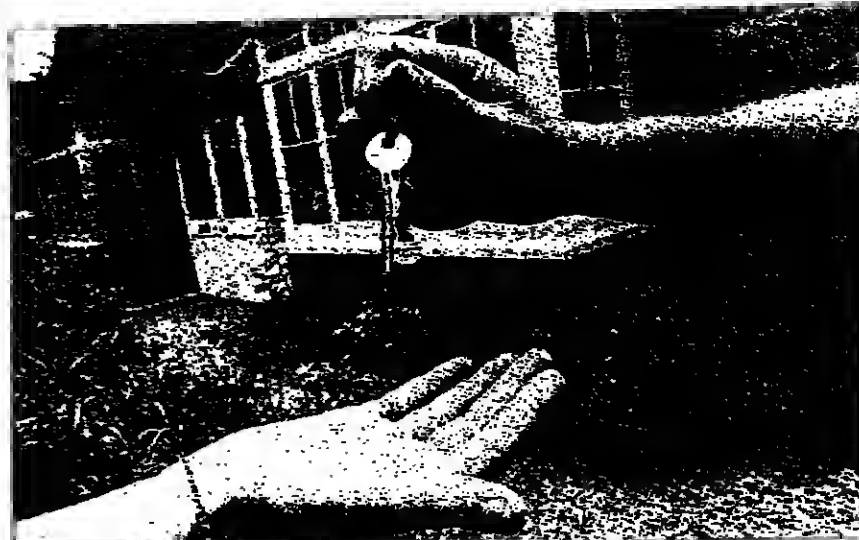
what relationship that particular estate agency has with the lender."

The code will also oblige advisers to disclose whether the fee they will receive for selling whichever loan they recommend is more or less than £250. If more than £250, the exact amount must be disclosed. This measure is intended to give consumers a way of judging whether the advice they are offered has been influenced by the payment the adviser would receive for the sale.

Mortgage lenders have been working to the code since July last year. Lenders representing 98 per cent of the UK mortgage market are pledged to refuse business from advisers who refuse to join its register.

The National Consumer Council has welcomed the code in principle, but stresses that strict monitoring and compliance will also be needed. Ruth Evans, an NCC director, says: "We want to see mystery shopping and compliance checks become part of the process. Good monitoring and enforcement are the keys to effective consumer protection under a voluntary code like this, but that doesn't come cheap."

For prospective borrowers, the new



Borrowers beware: Estate agents are often linked to lenders

mortgage code is only part of the answer to them being able to find the right mortgage. A mortgage which suits you might not be available through that lender's estate agency chain. Before an offer is considered on a property, it pays to research the market fully, looking at best buy tables published in most newspapers, including *The Independent*. When you have found the right loan, a mortgage offer "in principle" not

only avoids you being forced to seek a loan through that agent, it may also help secure the property you want.

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هنا من الأصل



The day I sold a haunted house ...

Estate agents are no longer allowed to write misleading details about a property, but boy, can they tell a good yarn about the strange sales they have been involved in. In every office, in every high street, the 'nightmare sale' has been immortalised for those who care to hear it. Fiona Brandhorst listens in on some agents' stories.

Gaudy interiors, divorcing vendors, ghostly goings-on – all the gory details can be recalled immediately, from the number of the house, to what the vendor had for breakfast on completion day. So, if you're sitting comfortably, I'll begin.

Looks can be deceptive, but when Matt, an estate agent who does not want to give his full name, entered the porch of a house he had been asked to value and saw 12 bottles of rancid milk, long abandoned by the milkman, he had a whiff of what was to come. It wasn't just the smell that hit him as the door was opened. The hallway was practically ankle deep in cigarette butts; food covered with various stages of fungal growth lay strewn over the floor.

"I've got the constitution of

an ox," says Matt, "but I retched." Upstairs, the toilet pan was broken and the owner had "peed in a series of buckets" in the bath. Estate agents are not known for their sense of humour, but Matt had to develop one, fast. "I found myself saying things like 'have you decorated lately?' as the vendor was obviously taking my visit seriously. When I finally left the house I had to him my shoes; the leather soles would never have recovered."

The nightmare didn't end there. Shortly after Matt was instructed to sell the property, the owner was found dead of hypothermia inside. It took 18 months to sort out his estate, during which time the house was vandalised. "At least the council came in and fumigated it," says Matt, who eventually sold the house to a builder and got his commission – and presumably a new pair of loafers.

Loathe them or like them, estate agents are said by some to be a breed of their own. But there's nothing like the enthusiasm of a young man with a mission to get things moving. Stephen Smith, from Bushells in south London, places his traumatic tale back in the early Eighties when he was a rookie estate agent, understandably eager to please and keen to sell. When the buyer pulled out of buying a studio flat Mr Smith was selling for an elderly lady,

he was a desperate man.

"I wasn't the only one," remembers Mr Smith. "The vendor was in tears in the office. She was about to lose a cottage next to her sister on the coast. I had to do something." His boss suggested he should approach the rest of the chain to see what everyone's position was. Thirty-six properties and two days later, Mr Smith reached the top of the chain.

Number 36 was a man selling a house for £320,000 (equivalent to around £1m today). With only a little persuasion he agreed to buy the studio. Within 48 hours the paperwork had been completed and a long line of people had smiles on their faces. But not as big as Mr Smith's. Four weeks later he resold the studio for more than £2,000 above its original price, scooping up two lots of commission and, no doubt, a promotion.

We are rarely grateful to estate agents for any effort required to sell our property. So when Jack Cooper, who runs his own agency in Hillingdon, Middlesex, received a letter from the vendor thanking him for his "effort, thoughtfulness and care" he felt vindicated for the unusual approach he had adopted to sell a three-bedroom house.

"Its major problem was its location. It was rather grand mock Tudor semi, smack bang in the

middle of a council estate, and was priced down accordingly. It produced so much interest there were traffic jams in the street as people drove past to have a look. The owner couldn't cope with so many disillusioned viewers, so she turned to Mr Cooper for his "individual service".

He arranged for several families to visit in groups, while the vendor gathered her children together and went for a long walk. "It was less stressful for her, and saved me time. I wouldn't have been able to run my business if I'd shown that many people around at different times." It took a couple of months, but the house was eventually sold. So who was brave enough to sign the contract? "It was someone who already lived in quite a rough area, so to him it was an improvement."

And then there's Charles and Tim, two agents who also prefer to remain nameless. They were called to value the house of a pensioner who had died. "When we got there, various members of the family were walking around inside picking up ornaments and looking in drawers. We went upstairs to the bedroom to find the bedcovers pulled back to reveal the imprint of a recently removed body. Apparently, the old lady had died that morning." While they were standing there in disbelief, the portable TV came on behind them. "You've never seen two

grown men leave a house so fast," said Charles.

Spine chillers aside, could estate agents refuse to take on an instruction, and would they have to be careful of giving the vendor the reasons why?

Hugh Dunsmore-Hardy, a former estate agent who is now chief executive of the National Association of Estate Agents, believes it would be "rare and uncommon" for a property to be turned down, unless the agent felt it could be better dealt with by a specialist for that particular type of property, or if he didn't have the right client base.

"Honesty is the best policy," he says. "Good agents are well versed in tactfully declining instructions where appropriate, especially when dealing with 'overpriced properties and intransigent owners'."

One estate agent in Essex almost refused to take on a property, because the vendor wanted to sell it for £65,000 more than she thought it was worth. (Properties on the same estate had recently sold at the lower price of £290,000.) However, with her commission in mind, the agent decided to take the chance. Within three days she had four offers for the asking price of £355,000. "I was amazed – there was no reason for it – but you can never account for sudden demand."

Peter Blades, from Barringtons

in south Buckinghamshire, is on the point of revising his nightmare tale. For the fifth time in a year, he's selling the same property. "It's a lovely house in a good spot, and each time I've had it under offer in 48 hours, for more than the previous asking price."

"Unfortunately, the vendor keeps losing the property he wants to buy, so he keeps withdrawing. Typically, the only time he's found a house he can move into straightaway, it's taken six weeks to get his property under offer."

If you still can't muster up any sympathy for estate agents, spare a thought for Jan, another anonymous negotiator. She was late for an appointment to meet vendors at their vacant property. She found herself stuck behind a small red car going at "around three miles an hour". She flashed her lights, put her hand on the horn and eventually overtook triumphantly, "giving them the V-sign".

She was relieved to find the vendors hadn't yet arrived when she pulled up outside their house. And yes, five minutes later the little red car stopped behind hers.

Bushells (0181-299 1722); Coopers (01895 230103); Barringtons (01753 892100); National Association of Estate Agents (01926 496800).



PENNY JACKSON

Hopes of rental regulation are dashed

Any hopes that the rental sector will be regulated before long were dashed this week when Nick Raynsford, the housing minister, rejected proposals from the industry that it should be controlled.

In a letter to Philip Cook, chairman of the Association of Residential Letting Agents, ARLA, he said that the compulsory registration of property would be a huge burden on local authorities, although the Government would stick to its commitment to register houses with multiple occupation.

This is a blow for ARLA and the professional bodies such as the RICS who want to set up their own regulatory body. Of course they could be accused of trying to create a professional cartel, and certainly the last government took the line that it would cut competition.

Anyone looking for security can of course always find an agent who subscribes to a code of professional conduct. But codes have no teeth, and while good landlords can pick and choose, anyone who has ever tried to find somewhere to rent, in London at least, knows that you get so desperate for attention and service you will end up going anywhere if there's the prospect of a home at the end of it.

And it does seem extraordinary that we should have such a cavalier attitude towards the legal and financial responsibilities of a letting agent – far more onerous than those of selling agents. At least, though, Mr Raynsford will be looking at how the millions of pounds of tenants' money can be better protected. He told Mr Cook that the Government would consider controls over tenants' deposits and clients' funds.

The shortage of family homes in Wandsworth, south-west London, is to be boosted by the building of two Edwardian-style houses in Lyford Road. They have 10ft-high ceilings in the main reception rooms and a conservatory-style family room leads on to a terrace and landscaped garden of about 135ft. Michael Comyn, of John D. Wood, the selling agents, says that this is the first time large houses in keeping with their opulent forebears have been built near Wandsworth Common. The developers of Lyford Villas are Thirstone Homes, and the guide price for both will be £950,000.

For anyone who would rather not set foot in an estate agency and is not on too tight a budget, they can employ Homesearch London via the Internet to do their walking for them. The company offers a service in finding and negotiating prime residential property for individuals or companies in central London on <http://www.homesearch.co.uk> or 0171 838 1066.

It's good to talk – especially when choosing a solicitor

Although clients technically instruct solicitors, the imbalance in knowledge means that solicitors invariably lead, and clients meekly follow. It needn't be like that. Finding the right solicitor, like finding the right property, often takes considerable time and energy. But, as Robert Liebman finds, this is time and energy usually well spent.

A London homeowner tried to buy a small plot of land at the back of his garden and ended up with a steep solicitor's bill, no addition to his garden, and plenty of questions about the legal profession.

Laurence owned a three-story Edwardian terraced house in Fulham which backed onto a derelict alley that ran the length of the terrace. All of the gardens were small, and when Laurence was offered the chance to purchase his section of alleyway, he eagerly grasped the opportunity to increase his garden by almost a half.

Letters piled up, and his solicitor's fees mounted accordingly, until the solicitor noted a restrictive covenant allowing the seller emergency access through Laurence's property. Laurence wanted no part of it and he withdrew, settling his solicitor's bill, which had run to several hundred pounds. His one regret was that the offending covenant hadn't come to his attention closer to the start of proceedings.

Laurence's friend Richard had observed these goings-on, and when he came to buy his own property, he instructed his solicitors to alert him sooner rather than later to tricky covenants. He needn't have bothered.

His solicitors had other surprises up their sleeves, some involving defects of character, others involving difficulties with basic maths.

Richard phoned his solicitor for a progress report on a Friday and was told that his solicitor was in a meeting. His call was not returned, so he phoned on the Monday, only for the receptionist to tell him

that his solicitor had gone on a two-week holiday abroad. When he then asked her who in the firm was currently handling his file and what progress had been made over the past few weeks, she replied "no one" and "none".

Delay was not in Richard's interest. He had found a superb property, and he did not want the seller to be tempted to entertain thoughts of other buyers. The news that his file had sat unattended for several weeks had fairly devastated him, and the emotional damage could not be undone when, a few days later, he learned that in fact his file had been handled all along by his solicitor's clerk.

Richard insisted that the file now be handled by the other solicitor in the practice who, as completion neared, told him to write a cheque in an amount that would have meant an underpayment of £1,000. Fortunately, she caught her own error in time.

Yes, solicitors are entitled to holidays, and mistakes occur in all professions. But these two firms of solicitors alone cornered a pretty good market in malfeasance, nonfeasance,

misfeasance and various other feasancess.

Regarding runaway legal fees, whether for a postage-stamp plot of land or a vast estate, "responsible solicitors always bear in mind the kind of case they are dealing with and maintain a sense of proportion. The solicitor should inform clients if costs start to rise disproportionately," says Tony Miles, a solicitor in the Northampton offices of Howes Percival. "With an inexpensive plot, the solicitor could have dispensed with formal contracts and asked for a copy of title straightaway."

As for vacationing solicitors, "it's not likely that many clients will ask their solicitor when he is likely to go on holiday, and solicitors may not be able to inform all of their clients. On the other hand, solicitors should notify those clients who might be affected by the absence," says Mr Miles.

"If you are deeply unhappy with a solicitor, disinstruct him. It happens, unfortunately." It can complicate matters, and you shouldn't do it if it harms more than helps your cause, but you can do it. Richard had come to regard his own solicitors as adversaries and had seriously

thought of changing midstream. The merest possibility of still further delay, however, kept him where he was.

Far better than disinstructing a solicitor is finding a good one from the outset, and Mr Miles believes that there is no substitute for meeting with and getting a good feel for your prospective solicitor. The good news is that you can, in effect, audition several solicitors without having to reach into your wallet. "Many solicitors charge little or nothing for a short first interview."

So says a 14-page Law Society brochure, "Working With Your Solicitor," which is as good a starting point as any. In addition to information about fees and other basic information, it discusses and asserts the often overlooked fact that all firms must have – and promulgate – a complaints procedure. "The letter your solicitor sent you after your first meeting should give the name of the person at the firm who handles complaints."

Howes Percival provides all of its conveyancing clients with their own guide, "What Happens Next," which clearly, concisely and simply details the procedures on

a step-by-step basis. "This came about as a result of the quality questionnaire which we also send out to all of our clients," says Mr Miles. "One of our clients filled in the questionnaire and indicated that what he referred to as an 'idiot's guide' would be helpful. So we prepared one."

In Mr Miles' opinion, clients help themselves by being assertive and communicative. "Tell your solicitor your requirements, hopes and intentions for the property. He will then be able to respond. If a client has a complaint or problem and doesn't tell you, it festers. The earlier it can be resolved, the sooner and better it can be resolved. And despite their aura of being highly trained professionals, solicitors can and should be challenged."

A solicitor you can challenge is also likely to be one you can fully communicate with; finding one should be a priority.

Howes Percival, Oxford House, Cliftonville, Northampton NN1 5PN, 01604 230400 (also in Milton Keynes and Norwich); Law Society, 113 Chancery Lane, London WC2A 1SX, 0171 242 1222.

Animal instincts in home-making

AT HOME: WITH A PET

When it comes to deciding which house to buy, it seems the dog has as much of a say as the family. One house-builder claims that three out of four people questioned admit they consider their pets when viewing a new home. They just won't budge without the budgie, or say 'auf wiedersehen' without the pet.

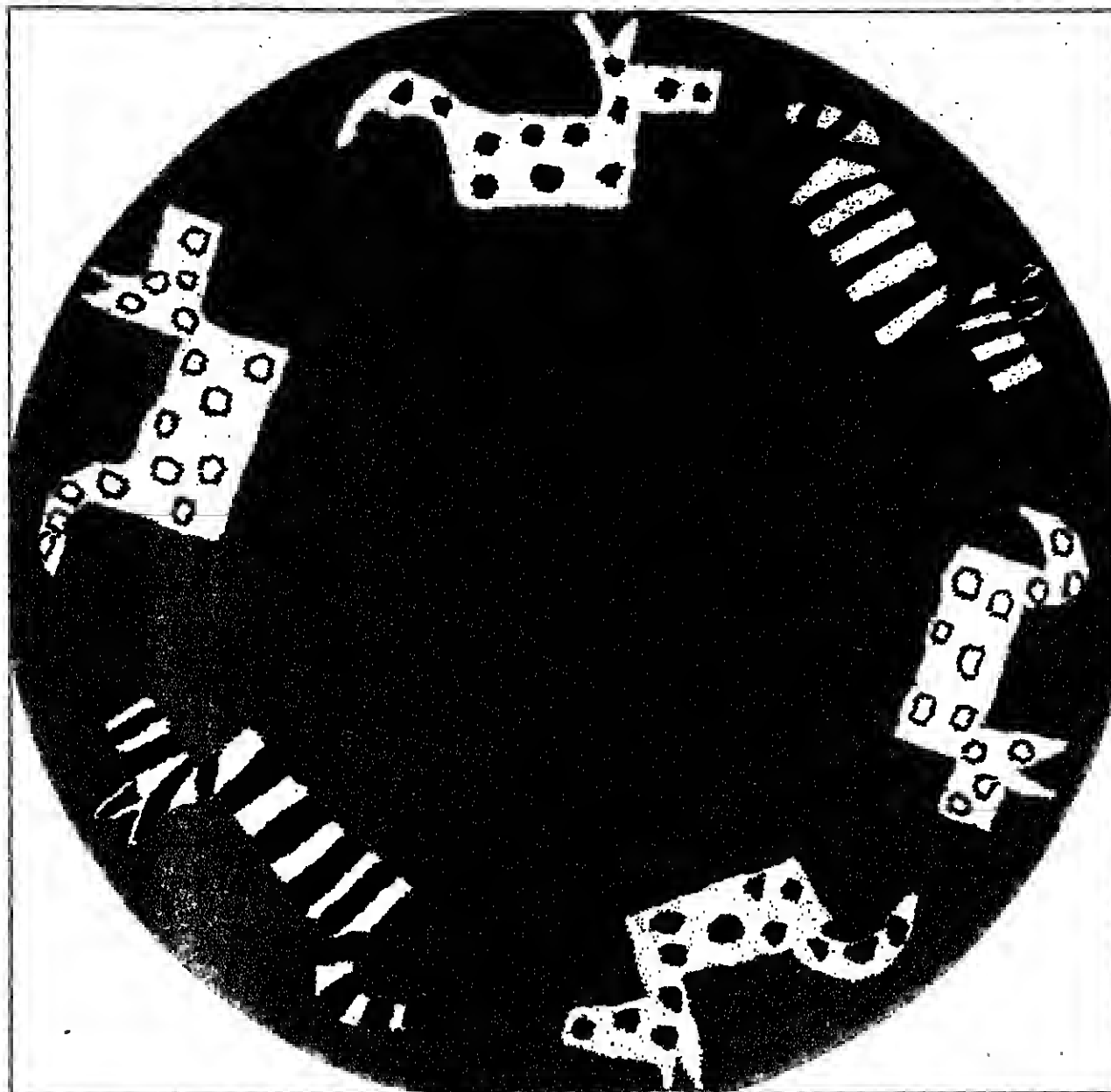
Rosind Russell sniffs around the issue.

Despite all the fuss about 'green' awareness, hardly anybody bothers to ask questions about environmentally friendly issues when visiting sales offices. What they want to find out is: will the cat like it?

When Crosby Homes was building Symphony Court in the centre of Birmingham, a canal-side development with electronically controlled gates, private parking, high-quality kitchens and bathrooms and plush fittings, at least one buyer demanded more. A cat flap was needed to allow access to a patio balcony.

The problem for Crosby's engineers was the French doors leading to the patio: they are double-glazed, and it's too tricky to incorporate a cat flap. Cutting a space in the woodwork would have made it too low - the cat would have had to learn to limbo-dance. In the end, a core drill was used to fit a tunnel through the 18-in cavity wall and a cat flap was fitted at each end. They called it 'Le Cat Tunnel'.

Animal passions can run riot in interior design, too.



from zebra, cowhide or leopard print cushions, £18 each from Debenhams to the more cottagey Kitty Cats rug from the mail order firm Orvis. The circular, 36-in-diameter rug, showing a budgie's eye view of six cats sharing a bowl of milk, costs £65.

More sophisticated - and

more expensive - is the Skip hand-tufted wool rug, at £460. It shows six abstract dogs on a black background, with a central black dog and black legs, £25 from Boots. And should the dog have his own music collection, The Holding Company sells CD holders shaped like Bonios, at £5.95 each.

Confused? Lie down and rest your feet on Shaun the Sheep, a 28-in woolly cushion with a pop-eyed stare, sooty black face and black legs, £25 from Boots. And should the dog have his own music collection, The Holding Company sells CD holders shaped like Bonios, at £5.95 each.

David and Kate Hicks Beach were on the point of buying a CD mail-order business when someone else moved in and grabbed it first. "It did sow the seeds of the idea of running a mail-order firm," says David, who had previously worked in farming.

Animal magic: Purves and Purves' Skip doggy rug, in hand-tufted wool, is at the sophisticated end of the market at £460

and Kate, a classical singer, were keen to find a business they could run together from home. Hence, the Bones Dog & Catalogue was born, run from the couple's converted sawmill near Cirencester, in the Cotswolds.

Three years down the line, they find they have a steady market for cat- and dog-related accessories, from denim dog beds to bone-shaped silver cufflinks (£34, for dog's best friend). One of their best sellers is a Forbes copper collar (£11.75), said to relieve the pain of arthritis for elderly dogs and horses. The black Labrador Caspar, seen modelling the collar in the catalogue, belongs to the novelist Joanna Trollope who was, until recently, a next-door neighbour.

One of the other models, Mustard the Jack Russell - seen testing a terrier tunnel in the catalogue - is, sadly, no longer with us. He was run over while out courting. The terrier tunnel, however, at £34.50, has been a huge success. Likewise the crinkle play bag for cats, price £10.99.

David and Kate are preparing a summer brochure. Now they have a 15-month daughter, Lucy, life couldn't be better. "I really appreciate my child," says David. "We have friends who don't see their children all week while they're out at work. They may make a lot more money than me, but we have a wonderful quality of life."

Contacts: Debenhams (0171-408 4444); Orvis (01264 349500); Purves and Purves (0171-530 8223); Boots (0115 950 6111); The Holding Company (0171-552 1600); Bones Dog & Catalogue (01285 750007).

THREE TO VIEW: IN THE COTSWOLDS



Orchard Place in Hidcote Boyce, near Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire, is a Grade II listed four-bedroom house extensively restored by the owners. It has flagstone floors, mulioned windows, oak-boarded floors, walls and doors and three inglenook fireplaces. There are three rooms in the attic and two above the utility room. There's also a small cottage with planning permission for restoration and extension. Agents Knight Frank are asking £385,000 (01789 297735).



A 16th century former pub-turned-restaurant, The Angel, is a landmark in Burford, a magnet for tourists. Dating from around 1548, it's built of stone, with slate roof and sash windows. Grade II listed, with open stone fireplaces, flagstone floors and beamed ceilings, it has the vital extra anyone needs in this busy town - two parking spaces. It's thought it would convert into a substantial five-bedroom house. Agents FPD Savills are asking £350,000 to £400,000 (01865 726 6000).



Croft Villa is a late Georgian Cotswold stone house in the heart of Broadway, which is lined with similarly attractive period houses. The house is currently divided into two apartments but would convert back into a three reception, five-bedroom home. It has a double garage, pretty gardens and access to the High Street. Knight Frank is asking for offers around £325,000 (01789 297735).

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